

NEW ZEALAND METHODISM AND WORLD WAR I:

CRISIS IN A LIBERAL CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

During World War I, New Zealand Methodism entered a crisis caused by two sets of problems, both of which reflected the numerical stagnation of the Church in the early twentieth century and the difficulty of communicating the Methodist gospel in a changing society. Firstly, the nature and scale of the war was totally outside the experience of that generation. In attempting to set this war within the context of a progressive view of civilisation, New Zealand Methodists developed the belief that the war was a barbarous anachronism which had been deliberately started by a German nation in league with Satan. Britain was therefore waging a holy war for the most exalted interests of righteousness. The unreality of this view caused theological and evangelistic problems later.

But the war also affected and focused attention on a crisis which was developing anyway. It had long been clear that Methodism was not winning the New Zealand people, and concerned Methodists tried to develop solutions. One solution was moral reform through prohibition; this movement passed its peak during the war years. Another was the development of policies of radical social reform, to be developed through the Liberal Party; but the war saw that Party's virtual demise, and less centrist groups rejected the liberal Methodist vision, preferring a class antagonism which was strong in 1919. A further solution was the espousal of evangelical liberalism; but while the clergy preferred this theological standpoint, many of the laity opted for

fundamentalism after the war.

Thus during the war and in the immediate post-war period, New Zealand Methodism became aware of and concerned over the rejection of its liberal vision of a righteous society by New Zealanders, and even by many Methodists. This thesis will examine the crisis and initial reactions to it.

ABBREVIATIONS

<u>A</u>	<u>Advocate</u>
<u>AJHR</u>	<u>Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives</u>
<u>CMP</u>	<u>Charles R.N. Mackie Papers</u>
<u>MACA</u>	<u>Minutes of the Annual Conference of the Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Church</u>
<u>MCNZ</u>	<u>Minutes of the Annual Conference of the Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Church in New Zealand</u>
	<u>and</u> <u>Minutes of the Annual Conference of the New Zealand Methodist Church</u>
<u>MGCA</u>	<u>Minutes of the General Conference of the Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Church</u>
<u>N.Z.E.F.</u>	<u>New Zealand Expeditionary Force</u>
<u>NZJH</u>	<u>New Zealand Journal of History</u>
<u>NZM</u>	<u>New Zealand Methodist</u>
<u>NZMT</u>	<u>New Zealand Methodist Times</u>
<u>NZPM</u>	<u>New Zealand Primitive Methodist</u>
<u>NZW</u>	<u>New Zealand Wesleyan</u>
<u>O</u>	<u>Outlook</u>
<u>PWHS</u>	<u>Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society</u>
<u>PWHS(NZ)</u>	<u>Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society of New Zealand</u>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is usually the place where the writer confesses sole responsibility for the errors, omissions, and inadequacies of his work. In so doing here, I wish to point out two things. Firstly, the research which I have made into Methodist history in New Zealand represents only the first small fraction of what can be examined in this field. Consequently, I regard none of my opinions as sacrosanct, and would expect further work (mine included) to overturn much of what I have concluded from the evidence available to me. Secondly, my biases (prejudices?) should be noted, in case they have distorted the conclusions which I have drawn from the evidence available to me. I am a Methodist of at least the fourth generation, and I value the Methodist tradition deeply, and more especially as it was begun through the work of John Wesley. I am a Christian whose theology veers vaguely somewhere between evangelical liberalism and evangelicalism. I hope that these biases have not destroyed the work entirely.

Thanks are due first of all to my parents, who have made it financially possible for me to undertake this work. Their continuing interest in the subject has been a source of much encouragement. Thanks are also due to my grandmother and aunt, who provided a stable environment at a crucial time, thus enabling me to write most of this thesis. Thanks should also go to my many relatives, who were a continuing spur to putting on paper a story in which they would have some interest.

I owe an irreparable debt to Rev Alan Woodley of the Methodist Connexional Office in Christchurch for making the

archives there available to me. Without this opportunity, this work would have been impossible. My deepest thanks also go to the Archivist there, Marcia Baker, for indicating the extent of the records held in the Connexional Office, and for helping me to understand much which would otherwise have remained mysterious to me. Thanks are also due to the many Methodists who have expressed interest in my work over the past two years.

Many thanks must go to my supervisor, Dr John Cookson, for all the help which he has given me during the work. I am especially grateful for the freedom which I was given while doing the research, for while this meant much wasted time and a thesis which took much longer to write than otherwise would have been the case, it enabled me to gain an awareness of the extent and variety of source material available which would otherwise have been denied me; this will help me and, I hope, others, in future work on Methodism.

Finally, my most grateful appreciation goes to my typist, Laurie Wood, who has at short notice turned a long and not very easy script into the form in which it is here presented.

INTRODUCTION

One of the significant gaps in New Zealand historiography is the lack of a thoroughly researched awareness of the religious scene in New Zealand at the turn of the century, or indeed at almost every stage of New Zealand history. While much attention has been focused on political and labour history, there have been very few attempts to assess the development of any denomination on its own terms. This omission has harmful effects, for the roles of various denominations in New Zealand society have often been examined using conceptual tools which are not very applicable to New Zealand church history. The attempts to discover class loyalties and political ideologies operating within and through a denomination are thus not totally convincing, although they are not totally meaningless either. But in order to understand the progress or otherwise of a denomination in New Zealand society, the most important of the many contexts within which to view the denomination is the hopes and aims of its own leaders. This thesis represents a first step towards illuminating the progress of New Zealand Methodism in these terms.

The major problem which was encountered in the attempt to assess New Zealand Methodism's progress in terms of its leaders' aims was the lack of secondary works on the subject. Most of the works which have been written about New Zealand Methodism are booklets about local churches; these are celebratory, and understandably so, since they have been almost entirely written to coincide with jubilee celebrations. Some useful histories of Methodism in various

districts have been written more recently, but these tend to be thin on the denomination's relation to the surrounding society, preferring instead to concentrate on the establishment, maintenance, and extension of the parochial structure. The best researched area of New Zealand Methodist history is the early missionary period, which had ended long before the period on which this thesis concentrates.

The original aim of this writer was to examine the pacifist movement, which rocked the Methodist Church in World War II. The attempt to discover the antecedents of this movement led back into World War I, and it soon became clear that pacifism was virtually non-existent in Methodism during the earlier war; much more important was the fact that the Methodist Church was altered by and/or during that war in such a way that a strong pacifist movement could emerge later. Since pacifists of a later date usually (though not always) underwent an ideological conversion characterised by a fairly rigorous appraisal of the issue, the expectation was that the evidence would demonstrate some kind of ideological upheaval in Methodist attitudes to war during and after World War I. The evidence indeed indicates such an upheaval, though some time after the war. But the evidence also indicates that this was one later manifestation of a general ideological upheaval in New Zealand Methodism which was occurring throughout the period which included World War I. This thesis is an examination (though still incomplete) of that general ideological upheaval.

The paucity of good, non-celebratory secondary works on New Zealand Methodist history showed here. There were only two works of any merit which dealt with this period in a

broad way. The major work was a two volume history of the European work in New Zealand Methodism which was written by E.W. Hames for the Church's 150th anniversary in 1972.¹ It is a rather chatty, "familial" account (and unashamedly so), and for that reason it is both infuriating and enlightening for the professional historian. Hames examines New Zealand Methodism by periods rather than by aspects of the Church's work, so that themes do not generally get the cohesive and extensive treatment that would have been very useful to this writer. Despite this, his conclusions are mostly sound. But the greatest value of Hames' work is that its informal style often gives an indispensable insight into the actual workings of the Methodist machinery and the flavour of local church life at different times.

The second work was a lecture delivered by Peter Lineham on the place of evangelism in the work of the Church throughout the existence of New Zealand Methodism.² Fortunately, a copy came into the writer's possession in time to prove extremely useful, because it is an excellent account of a major part of the Church's ongoing work. Lineham sets Methodist evangelism in the context of the changing theological and practical aims of the denominational leaders and reactions of the denominational adherents. This contextual exploration confirmed many insights gained independently by this writer and added some further helpful points. The lecture's main weaknesses for this thesis are clear enough, and Lineham would agree - its brevity, and its particular focus on one facet of the Church's work. But these in no way detract from its usefulness, and it has been used extensively.

These two works provided invaluable insights into the early twentieth century period, without which the research findings would have been more difficult to interpret. But it was necessary to investigate the primary sources, and the two main sources were both official denominational publications. New Zealand Methodism at the time was ruled by the clergy, and more particularly by a senior section of the clergy, and both of these official sources reflect this domination, but in a slightly different way. The first source was the series of Minutes of the Church's Annual Conferences. The Conference was the legislative body of New Zealand Methodism, and so its decisions represented the majority view of the Methodist ministers (and this view was almost always unanimous or near-unanimous anyway). The weakness of the Minutes is that they provide the conclusions of the ministers as recorded in the reports presented to, and resolutions passed by, the Conferences; but they tell virtually nothing of the processes by which such conclusions were arrived at. For a better (though not complete) understanding of these processes, it was necessary to examine the second primary source, the Methodist journal (called the New Zealand Methodist Times during the war); since this became the most important source for this thesis, it is necessary to examine its advantages and disadvantages in more detail.

During the war, the journal was edited by Rev William J. Williams,³ one of the most influential men in New Zealand Methodism during his lifetime. Coming to New Zealand from Britain in 1870, his influence began with his entry into Methodist journalism in 1880; he soon assumed the editorial office, and continued in it till early 1893. The

consummation of New Zealand Methodist Union in 1913 saw him resume the office for another nine years, all but one of which occupied the period following his passage into the supernumerary ranks. The nagging question left by the undoubted stamp of his personality on the journal is: how representative of the opinions during World War I of New Zealand Methodists, especially the ministers, were the concerns of an old man? Williams was a "rather pompous"⁴ man with a decidedly florid rhetorical style and adamantly held theological and ethical viewpoints; such was his concentration during the war on a few certain issues, particularly prohibition, that it is possible to detect a slide towards raving fanaticism in him. This conclusion is enhanced by the ridiculousness of some of the opinions of the war which he had developed by 1918.

But if the accusation of "raving fanaticism" is to be deservedly applied to Williams, then it must be applied to a much wider group in this period. The Conference was always careful to select, as editors, men whose viewpoints followed the official line closely, and only one instance where the Conference subsequently overturned an editorial line was discovered during the war.⁵ So if Williams was a lone fanatic, some explanation for the Conference's glad willingness to retain him in the post until he himself resigned in 1922 must be offered. Perhaps the ministers were prepared to tolerate an old man's opinions rather than hurt his feelings by an unceremonious dumping; but there had been previous attempts to remove editors who had held too many idiosyncratic opinions, and moreover, Williams was the first of a number of supernumerary editors who were used during the

twentieth century. Much more simple is the view that Williams remained as editor because he expressed most adequately the things that Methodist ministers wanted to say to wartime New Zealand society.

This does not exclude the possibility that Williams symbolised (perhaps in an accentuated form) a fanaticism which had indeed developed among wartime Methodist ministers. "Fanaticism" is a word with decidedly pejorative connotations, but this thesis will advance the view that a dangerous extremism did develop among New Zealand Methodist ministers during the war, though not to the same extent as among other Protestant clerical groups.⁶ It may be noted, too, that one expression of this extremism was the emergence of absurd views of the war; as reprinted articles from British religious journals show, the extremism was certainly not confined to out-of-touch ministers deleteriously influenced by the xenophobic reactions to the war of the surrounding community. This thesis will advance the view that by 1914, a conflict was developing between the social realities of a rapidly modernising world, and late nineteenth century Methodist theological and ethical insights and prescriptions. The choice was increasingly becoming the reformulation of the Methodist standpoint or its eventual irrelevance to the surrounding society. The war effectively delayed the reformulation; the tension and jingoistic patriotism of wartime New Zealand society, in which Methodists shared, did not lend itself to ideological reasonableness and modification, and so the advocacy of the moralistic Methodist ethic of the early twentieth century solidified and became even more shrill. Meanwhile, the gap

between appearance and reality continued to widen, so that the necessity of reformulation had become much more obvious in the disillusionment and uncertainty of the immediate post-war period. Whether or not this refusal to accept ideological readjustments during the war constitutes fanaticism may be left to the reader to decide; the writer is biased in the matter!

It is established, then, that the views of the Methodist journal reflected the views of the Methodist clergy during the war. It is the contention of the writer that the journal's views also reflected the views of the Methodist laity during this period, although to a much lesser extent. The more extensively one focuses on the laity rather than the clergy, the less meaningful does Methodism become in the ideology of declared Methodists. Even in the analysis of the prohibition movement, which was very popular among the Methodist constituency, Methodist unity tended to become frayed at the denominational edges where commitment was much weaker; in the bitter aftermath of licensing poll defeats, accusations were made of the too frequent absence of "loyal Methodist support for the prohibition cause. But while there was a large body of declared Methodists whose lives were little, if at all, affected by the denomination, there was also a large body of sincere Methodists who were concerned about the denomination's problems, although most of them perceived these problems from a different perspective to that of the denominational leaders.

But this unity of viewpoint was demonstrated during the war in one other aspect. The Methodist view of the war reflected that of New Zealand society. The Church always

takes the narrow path between views so close to society's that the spiritual independence of the Church is destroyed, and views so extreme that their irrelevance to society prevents the Church from exercising any effective moral judgement concerning society's values and actions. By World War I, the Church had swung too far in the former direction, for all its advocacy of moral reform; this swing led it to take its views, especially of the war, from the surrounding social environment, and so it is almost certain that even nominal Methodists agreed with the Church's view in this case. But the Church did not exercise any influence in this agreement, nor was it able to use this agreement to exercise any influence in other matters. In any case, the fringes of Methodism did not matter in the formulation of Methodist opinion, but the loyal and devout section of the laity did matter, and their views were undoubtedly closer to clerical views.

Thus the views advanced in the Methodist journal during the war may be taken as representative of the views of the Methodist constituency, to an extent which decreased* with increasing distance from the core of the denominational leadership. One other feature of wartime Methodist journalism must be noted. There was some Primitive disaffection with the union of 1913, and the readership of the pre-war Primitive journal appears to have been unwilling to receive an effectively Wesleyan journal. To counter this, Rev James Cocker⁷ was appointed as Associate Editor in 1915 with a view to giving the journal a more Primitive flavour.⁸ Cocker's own column included a large number of reprinted articles from British religious circles, and the reappearance

of these articles in the Methodist Times has been taken as some guide to New Zealand Methodist views of the war; particular confidence may be placed in the reprinted opinions of British Methodist leaders, as New Zealand Methodism still tended to follow the intellectual currents of British Methodism at this stage.

The paucity of secondary sources dealing with New Zealand Methodism necessitated some reliance on the comparative experience of overseas denominations in order to provide some insights into the general pattern of New Zealand Methodist religiosity. The most valuable work proved to be Albert Marrin's study of British Anglican attitudes to World War I.⁹ Marrin shows that the war revealed such horrifying new features that the traditional, reasonable, temperate doctrine of the just war was swept aside as a justification for Britain's involvement in the war; instead, a holy war explanation was increasingly adopted, with the earthly warfare being seen as a representation of the heavenly conflict. The Methodist Times provided evidence that the Methodist clergy adopted similar views to a considerable extent, and so the detailed analysis of Methodist attitudes to the war which the first part of the thesis provides owes much to Marrin's work.

The thesis is divided into two sections. The first section examines Methodist attempts to provide new justifications for waging war following the breakdown of the just war doctrine in the face of unprecedented horrors and atrocities. These attempts were not very successful; they corresponded to neither the reality of the war nor the evangelical theology of the Church. The second section

examines Methodist hopes of the advance of righteousness in the "new age" which was to follow the war. These hopes were a reflection of the crisis which had been developing in Methodism for a number of years before the war, with the Church's adherence stagnating, and even beginning to decline, at a time of continued increase in the population of New Zealand. The examination of the problems uncovered by and during World War 1 is preceded by an examination of the structure of the Methodist Church in 1914; this chapter includes coverage of aspects of Methodism which were important in the life of the Church, but which are not examined in the thesis.

FOOTNOTES: INTRODUCTION

1. Out of the Common Way: The European Church in the Colonial Era 1840-1913, PWHS(NZ), vol.27, nos.3-4, 1972; Coming of Age: The United Church 1913-1972, PWHS(NZ), vol, 28, nos.1-2, 1974.
2. "New Zealanders and the Methodist Evangel", unpublished paper presented to the School of Evangelism, New Zealand Methodist Church, 31 May 1982.
3. Entered the ministry in 1870; President in 1888; Editor, NZM, July 1884-March 1893; Editor, NZMT, April 1913-April 1922; Chairman of the District seven times; became a Supernumerary in 1914.
4. As described by the writer's great-uncle W.T. Blight, himself a leading minister in a later period. In Williams' defence, it may be noted that the pomposity and the florid rhetoric were not uncommon features of the pre-war period, when ministers were persons of some consequence in the community, and were used to standing on their dignity.
5. See below, Ch.6, p.172
6. See below, Ch.9, pp.310-13
7. Entered the Primitive ministry in 1890; President of the Primitive Methodist District Conference in 1900; Editor, NZPM, June 1905-March 1913; became a Supernumerary in 1922.
8. See below, Ch.4, n.36, p.117.
9. The Last Crusade: The Church of England in the First World War, Durham, Duke University Press, 1974.

CHAPTER I

NEW ZEALAND METHODISM IN 1914:

SOURCES OF POWER AND INFLUENCE

When war came in 1914, New Zealand Methodism seemed to be in a transition period. Indeed, at first glance, 1913-1914 appears to be a natural dividing line in New Zealand Methodist history, because the impact of World War I ensured that the union of the Wesleyan Methodist Church and the Primitive Methodist Church represented a new direction in the course of New Zealand Methodism. This thesis will deepen that impression by focusing on both the changes which the war created and the changes which, while occurring during or just after the war, were happening or were about to happen anyway. However, these changes must be set in the context of a Church which was dominated by its ministry, which was in turn dominated by a small section that held most of the major offices. The Methodist ministry was "liberal" in outlook, but this liberalism meant different things at different times, and even at the same time. Within this context, the changes of the war period do not represent a great dividing line in the course of New Zealand Methodist history. This chapter will examine sources of authority and influence in New Zealand Methodism at the start of World War 1, focusing mainly on aspects of continuity, but also discerning gradual changes in this continuity.

1. Sources of Power: The Pastoral Work and its Leaders

At the top of the Methodist hierarchy was the President of Conference. The Conference was the annual national

gathering of ministers in full connexion with the church plus elected lay representatives, and so it was the highest Church Court in New Zealand Methodism. But the President did not have the powers of an Anglican or a Roman Catholic archbishop. He was elected annually from ministers 'of not less than fifteen years' standing',² which meant fifteen completed years in connexion with the Methodist Church, or fifteen years from the time that the minister entered the active pastoral work. He could not hold this office for two consecutive years; in fact, after Methodist Union in 1913, no minister has been President of the united Church twice. The President chaired the proceedings of the Conference, but had only a deliberative and a casting vote. Thus New Zealand Methodism vested its authority in collectivities rather than in individual offices.

Each President was elected at the beginning of a Conference, whereupon he assumed the office. His year of office began by chairing that Conference; during the year, he conducted official correspondence and represented the Church on official occasions; and at the following Conference, he delivered an inaugural retiring address and an ordination sermon, both of which expressed personal views carrying no imprimatur. As Michael McKernan points out of Australian Methodism (where the same system prevailed), some Conferences "...disclaimed responsibility for the contents of a particular address."³ McKernan rightly insists that Methodism's real leaders were "...those men who impressed their brethren by the force of their personalities or by their heroic deeds."⁴ He again rightly claims that "...it is probable that Methodist lay-people took more notice of their

local clergyman than of their official leaders...."⁵

On this argument, the influence of the President was very slight; McKernan concludes that "...it is difficult to speak, in general, of 'Methodist opinion'."⁶ Even with the added qualification, this is proven only if it can be shown that the Methodist ministry was not a cohesive body with similar attitudes to various issues. But the New Zealand Methodist ministry, at least, was remarkably unified and closely-knit in this respect. There were surprisingly few issues over which divisions of any size developed. Thus while a President stated personal views in a retiring address, he almost always represented the views of the ministry overall concerning the issues which he addressed. Moreover, any minister who reached the President⁷ was highly esteemed among his ministerial brethren, and his opinions were accorded some respect, though of an informal kind. So except where a Conference declared otherwise, a retiring President's opinions may be taken as representative of the Methodist clergy's attitudes, not because of the office, but because of the extensive unanimity of clerical views.

One change in the Presidential functions should be noted, because it was made during the war. It had long been argued that requiring a President to chair the business of the Conference at which he was elected placed a great strain on the President. The task required a thorough knowledge of the Book of Laws and the Standing Orders of Conference, and without this knowledge, experienced and wily ministers could entwine the President in legal tangles. Moreover, it was far from easy to chair a Conference of experienced public speakers without warning (though the system of election to

the Presidency actually meant that a man usually figured as a prominent contender for a few years before his eventual election). For these reasons, the 1916 Conference resolved to elect the President at the Conference preceding his assumption of the office; the first such election was held in 1917.⁷ The 1917 Conference added that from 1919, the incoming President was to deliver the inaugural address.⁸

Legislative power resided in the Conference, which consisted of three groups. The first and most important group consisted of all ministers in full connexion with the Conference. These were men who had been ordained, almost always after serving on probation for four years. In 1914, all ministers had also undergone three years of study as theological students, except for a few of the most senior ministers in the days before the New Zealand Wesleyans were able to provide their own training. Supernumerary ministers were included among those in full connexion. The second group consisted of laypeople who were elected as representatives of local Circuits by the Circuits' Quarterly Meetings. The third group consisted of a few laypeople whose positions on various Boards and Committees gave them ex officio membership in the Conference. No layperson could retain the same office which entitled such membership for longer than six years.⁹

Taking the latter two groups together the Conference (which generally numbered about 2000 members) was to consist of an equal number of ministers in full connexion and elected lay representatives (including the ex-Vice-President). Thus the laity had theoretical equality. In fact, most lay people had minimal influence on the proceedings of Conference.

Often they were members of very few Conferences. But a few talented and prominent laymen, mostly holding ex officio membership, could and did exercise some influence. They had been members for a considerable number of years and had given much service in Church Courts at all levels. The highest office which they could reach was the Vice-Presidency. It is significant that two of the first three, and three of the first nine, Vice-Presidents were ex-Primitives. The Primitives did not figure much in the highest offices in the united Church's first two decades.

The Conference was ruled by the ministry, and in fact by a small proportion of the abler and more experienced ministers. Most of these men were to be found on the Stationing Committee of Conference, which was by far the most important Conferential Committee, since it controlled the placement (or "stationing") of ministers in circuits. This was extremely important, since ministers could not stay in any circuit longer than five years; after five years (and usually after three or four years), they had to move to another circuit. The length of the "itinerancy" (as this was known) was a contentious issue. Under Wesley, it had been extremely brief, and in the mid-nineteenth century, it was still limited to three years. As ministerial standards improved, ministers' resentment of the frequent moves (often the length of New Zealand at a time when travel was extremely slow and wearisome) grew; they began to desire lengthy stays in one circuit in order to capitalise on a pastorate's growing influence in the general community. The three-year limit was extended to five years in 1881,¹⁰ but this still did not satisfy many ministers, and in 1914 it was made possible

for an appointment to be extended indefinitely beyond five years, under stringent conditions.¹¹ Circuits did have some influence in stationing; they had the right to invite a minister annually, and an invitation was usually respected by the Stationing Committee.

The Stationing Committee consisted of the President and Secretary of Conference, the ex-President and ex-Secretary, the Chairmen of Districts, one Ministerial Representative elected at each District Synod, and an equal number of laypeople, including the Vice-President.¹² The really influential men were the Presidents, Secretaries, and Chairmen. These men also largely controlled the affairs of the ten Districts (reduced to nine in 1920 by the amalgamation of the Otago and Southland Districts) into which New Zealand Methodism was divided. As will be shown below, many of these men occupied these offices for many years, which gave them lengthy and extensive influence in the pastoral work. The District Synod, which they chaired and had much authority in, assessed the suitability of candidates for the ministry and exercised supervision over the work of the ministers; most of the practical assessment of ministerial ability was made at this level.

Over the years, the composition of this group of ministers varied, but it generally numbered about twenty. Their influence, added to that of the few ministers who held separated offices, was decisive in the formation of Connexional policy. The cohesion of the ministry meant that splits of any significance in the New Zealand Connexion depended on clerical leadership and divisions within the ministry. Such splits were rare; one of the few helped to

end the movement for separation from the Australasian Connexion in the 1880's. Faced with an unbending General Conference, the New Zealand Conference's arguments were decisively weakened by its own lack of unanimity. But to have any hope of success, a clerical protest group itself needed to be firmly based among the group who held power. A classic example of this is provided by moves to abolish the office of Connexional Secretary, which William Morley vacated in 1902.¹³ Five of the six Wesleyan Synods recommended abolition to the 1902 Conference. It was suggested, with some truth, that the office had been created for the man. At the Conference, Morley, in reporting for the last time as Connexional Secretary, recommended the continuance of the office. After a prolonged debate, the motion was passed by eighty votes to six! This example demonstrates how hard it was to change a policy which had been approved by the leaders of the Church.

This thesis will concentrate mainly on the development of ideology within Methodism, and its effects on and the reaction to the position of Methodism in New Zealand society. The laity certainly were not insignificant in the work of the Church; indeed, their response to the Christian message was the reason for the Church's whole existence. Levels of lay participation in the work of the Church varied. There were enthusiastic workers at all levels, from those who rose to significant participation at connexional level to local church workers; then there were ordinary church members, adherents, and children, whose level of participation in and commitment to the Church was not as great as that of the church workers. But since this thesis concentrates mainly on

ideology, the group with which it is mostly concerned is the clergy. The ministers, or certain groups within them, directed the life of the Church and formulated Methodist opinion. The rest of this chapter will examine which groups and which men held the significant offices during this period.

2. Ministerial Groups and Pastoral Offices

A brief examination of the early history of New Zealand Methodism throws some light on the development of the New Zealand ministry. Wesleyan Methodism began in 1822 as a mission to the Maoris, and until 1855 remained in connexion with the British Wesleyan Methodist Conference. In that year, Australasian Methodism became a self-governing Annual Conference, of which the New Zealand work was a part. Two Mission Districts were formed for this work, which was still mainly among the Maoris. The Anglo-Maori Wars of the 1860's brought about the collapse of the Maori Mission, and the Wesleyans concentrated their attention on the Europeans. When the Australasian Connexion was reconstituted in 1874, the European work was the backbone of the Church.

As reconstituted in 1874, New Zealand Wesleyan Methodism was one of five Annual Conferences in the Australasian Connexion. The General Conference, which met approximately triennially, exercised general oversight in the Connexion, and all legislative reform had to be passed by the General Conference. But the Annual Conferences had a considerable measure of autonomy. Thus New Zealand Wesleyan Methodism was made much more responsible for its own work, which was now centred on a rapidly growing European population.

This pattern coincided with a shift in the composition

Table 1.1: Ministerial Standing of Presidents
of Conference 1874-1953¹

	Completed Years				
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39
1874-1883	5	1	1	1	2
1884-1893	3	6		1	
1894-1903	1	3	4	1	1
1904-1913		1	5	2	2
1914-1923			4	4	2
1924-1933			3	5	2
1934-1943			1	6	3
1944-1953			3	5	2

Source: MCNZ, 1874-1952

1. All Tables in this chapter refer to ministers of the Wesleyan Methodist and Methodist Churches, and all are taken from the same source.

of the Methodist ministry. The missionary period had ended, and in fact very few of the early missionaries were still in the New Zealand Wesleyan ministry in 1874. They were being replaced, from the 1860's onwards, by a younger generation. After the constitutional adjustments of the early 1870's, there was a need to fill many more positions of responsibility, and considering the age structure of the ministry, it was natural that some ministers would rise to high office at a very early stage of their ministerial career.

Statistics of the ministerial standing of presidents during various periods shows this pattern quite clearly. Table 1.1 shows the trend towards later Presidential honours in a man's ministerial career. After the first four years, in which the Presidents were all senior missionaries, the

younger generation tended to monopolise the office at a

Table 1.2: Ministerial Standing of Chairmen of Districts
1874-1953

	Completed Years (per cent) ¹							
	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40
1874-1883		21.7	26.7	13.3	13.3	11.7	10.0	3.3
1884-1893		5.0	16.7	45.0	21.7	10.0	1.7	
1894-1903			5.0	18.3	36.7	30.0	10.0	
1904-1913			1.6	7.8	28.1	18.8	32.8	10.9
1914-1923			2.1	16.7	31.3	21.9	17.7	10.4
1924-1933			4.4	15.6	25.6	24.4	20.0	10.0
1934-1943				6.7	21.1	40.0	28.9	3.3
1944-1953	3.3	1.1	10.0	6.7	24.4	18.9	31.1	4.4
Average								
1874-1953	0.5	2.8	7.4	15.2	25.4	22.8	20.2	5.7

1. Each completed year given represents the lowest of a group of five complete years, except for the forty-year category, which represents forty years and above.

comparatively early stage in their career. From 1878 to 1901, in fact, only five of twenty-four Presidents were of at least twenty-five years' standing, and all but one of these five were Presidents in the last third of this period. After 1901, a different pattern emerged, and the Presidents were all of at least twenty-five years' standing. The sole exception was Rev Charles H. Laws¹⁴, who was President in 1910. Whatever else this may have been, it was certainly a recognition of Laws' outstanding abilities, which were such that Laws received a second Presidency in New Zealand Methodism's centenary year, 1922.

Statistics of the ministerial standing of Chairmen of Districts tend to confirm this pattern. Table 1.2 shows that the early generation tended to continue in this office for a

long time. From 1904 to 1933, the percentage of Chairmen of at least forty years' standing was nearly twice the average for the period surveyed. It appears, then, that there was a

Table 1.3: Ministerial Standing of Presidents of Conference 1874-1953 (ten-year intervals)

Period Began	Completed Years					Total
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	
1830-9					2	2
1840-9			1	1		2
1850-9		1		1		2
1860-9	7	3	2	1	1	14
1870-9	1	5	4	2	2	14
1880-9	1	2	4	4	3	14
1890-9			4	2	1	7
1900-9			2	6	4	12
1910-9			2	7	1	10
1920-9			2	1		3

ministerial generation which reached positions of authority within New Zealand Wesleyan Methodism at a comparatively early stage of their careers, and held on to them throughout the rest of their very long careers.

Statistics relating the ministerial standing of Presidents and Chairmen to the period in which they entered the active pastoral work confirm these trends and show further interesting patterns. Table 1.3 shows that the groups which began from 1860 to 1889 produced forty-two Presidents. The significance of this preponderance is somewhat lessened by the fact that nineteen of these Presidents were of under twenty-five years' standing; moreover, as Table 1.4 shows, fifteen of these nineteen entered the ministry from 1860 to 1874. The same Table clearly shows the development of the practice of finding Presidents from among ministers of at least twenty-five years' standing; this development coincided with the growth

Table 1.4: Ministerial Standing of Presidents
of conference 1874-1953 (fifteen-year
intervals)

Period Began	Completed Years					Total
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	
1830-1844					2	2
1845-1859		1	1	2		4
1860-1874	8	7	2	1	2	20
1875-1889	1	3	8	6	4	22
1890-1904			6	6	4	16
1905-1919			2	9	2	13
1920-1934			2	1		3

of a more evenly balanced active ministry. But Table 1.3 enhances the importance of these groups, showing that by comparison with earlier and later groups, the 1890's group did not figure significantly in its production of Presidents. This development was significant, for this group's first President, in 1917, was Rev William A. Sinclair.¹⁵ Thus this group was beginning to reach high office during the war.

A similar pattern is revealed for Chairmen in Table 1.5. The figure for the 1880's group, low compared to the two preceding groups, is bolstered by appointments to full-time offices. Thomas G. Brooke¹⁶ was Organising Secretary of the Home Mission Department from 1909 to 1923; Charles H Garland¹⁷ was Principal of the Theological College from 1912 to his death in 1918; C.H. Laws followed Garland in this office from 1920 to 1930. The very high figure for the 1900's group is further enhanced by a listing of their contributions to full time offices (admittedly after the war, when more offices had been created). Harry Ranston was Tutor, and later Principal,

Table 1.5: Ministerial Standing of Chairmen of Districts 1874-1953

Period Began	Completed Years ¹								Total
	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	
1830-9							3	2	5
1840-9					6	7	4		17
1850-9			1	6	4	5			16
1860-9		13	24	23	17	14	7	2	100
1870-9		3	3	14	19	17	25	15	96
1880-9			2	8	22	19	19	9	79
1890-9			1	12	27	14	13		67
1900-9			1	16	25	37	29	5	113
1910-9			4	6	20	26	22	2	80
1920-9				8	15	1			24
1930-9		1	9						10
1940-9	3								3

1. See Table 1.2, note 1.

Table 1.6: Ministerial Standing of Chairmen of Districts 1874-1953

Period Began	Completed Years (per cent) ¹							
	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40
1860-9		13.0	24.0	23.0	17.0	14.0	7.0	2.0
1870-9		3.1	3.1	14.6	19.8	17.7	26.0	15.6
1880-9			2.5	10.1	27.8	24.1	24.1	11.4
1890-9			1.5	17.9	40.3	20.9	19.4	
1900-9			0.9	14.2	22.1	32.7	25.7	4.4
1910-9			5.0	7.5	25.0	32.5	27.5	2.5
Average 1874- 1953	0.5	2.8	7.4	15.2	25.4	23.0	20.0	5.7

1. See Table 1.2, note 1.

of the Theological College from 1920 to 1940; E. Percy Blamires¹⁸ was Youth Secretary from 1922 to 1938; Arthur J Seamer¹⁹ was Superintendent of Maori Missions from 1920 to

1923, and then combined this office with that of General

Table 1.7: Proportion of Offices Filled to Offices Available of Chairmen of Districts 1874-1953

Period Began	Years in Office	Total Offices Filled	Total Offices Available	Percentage
1860-9	1874-1907	100	204	49.02
1870-9	1888-1919	96	220	43.64
1880-9	1898-1931	79	268	29.48
1890-9	1914-1936	67	213	31.46
1900-9	1919-1946	113	253	44.66
1910-9	1927-1953	80	243	32.92

Superintendent of the Home Mission Department from 1924 to 1938; and M.A. Rugby Pratt was Connexional Secretary from 1927 to 1945. Thus this group filled all the major full-time offices which became vacant in the 1920's (and mostly in the critical first half of that decade).

The trends for the distribution of the Chairmanship broadly repeat those for the Presidency. Table 1.6 provides percentages of a group's total number of offices in each group of completed years. Of significance for the war years are the percentages of the 1870's and 1880's groups. The latter group's percentages for twenty-five years' to thirty-nine years' standing are all slightly above average; this becomes significant when added to the former group's percentages for thirty-five years' standing and above, which are considerably above average.

Table 1.7 gives important confirmation of all the trends discussed above. To discover just how significantly any group figured in the Chairmanship statistics, the number of offices it occupied must be set against the number of offices

available. Of necessity, the method of calculating the number of offices available is a little crude; the number of offices available during the years within which a group actually occupied this office is used, but consideration should also be given to the number of years in which a group was eligible for office. However, the criterion reveals two interesting facts: the relative lateness at which the 1890's group first occupied the office, and the short time in which it occupied the office. These facts lessen somewhat the value of that group's ratio. Other trends are confirmed: the 1860's group's very high occupancy; the 1880's group's low occupancy extenuated by the number of their separated ministers; the 1900's group's high occupancy combined with the number of their separated ministers.

To summarise these statistics, then, it seems clear that the ministerial groups of the 1870's and 1880's held widespread power in the New Zealand Methodist Connexion in 1914 and throughout the war years; when the rise of the ministerial group of the 1900's after the war is recognised, it is possible to discover to a large extent the squeezing out of the 1890's group. Thus in the decade of World War I, a senior generation still held much of the power within New Zealand Methodism, as it had already done, in some cases, for up to thirty years. But of course, real influence on the life of the Methodist Connexion did not necessarily equate with the tenure of important pastoral offices. It is therefore necessary to examine the separated offices and the men who held them more closely in order to discern their influence on New Zealand Methodism at that time.

3. The Separated Offices and their Incumbents

The first separated office to be created was the Connexional Secretaryship. It was approved in 1892, not without strong opposition. As the first separated office, it generated ill-feeling regarding the release of any minister from circuit work; this is indicated by the fact that the office's supporters stressed its "primarily pastoral" role.²⁰ Some of this opposition appears to have been connected with the fact that the able but autocratic William Morley was almost certain to be appointed to this office once it was created.

Morley entered the ministry in 1863, and his great and wide-ranging ability was quickly harnessed by the newly created New Zealand Annual Conference. He occupied the foremost pulpit in one of all four main centres for sixteen of nineteen years. He edited the Wesleyan in 1877, 1878, and 1882; he was Secretary of Conference in 1877, 1878, and 1880; he was President of the New Zealand Conference in 1879 and 1884, and President of the General Conference for a three-year term from 1894; he was Principal of Wesley College, Three Kings, in 1892; and he was Chairman of various Districts twenty-one times from 1874 to 1901. But his major achievements were as secretary of the newly created Church Building and Loan Fund from 1882, and as Connexional Secretary in charge of various Funds, including the above mentioned, from 1893. He toured the country constantly, and "...hammered the Trusts to get their deeds in order and to pay off their mortgages."²¹ He also made frequent appeals for resources for a central fund to aid the building of churches and general extension.

These efforts were not always popular, and Morley's

dominating (and occasionally domineering) influence was resented by some. But his work was absolutely vital for the Wesleyan Methodist Church in the late nineteenth century; the Church was in a transition period, with a new need to combine pioneering and suburban expansion. For many communities, it was a period of consolidation, reflected in the replacement of a small chapel by a substantial church. Hames summarises the contemporary pattern well:

It was comparatively easy to set up some primitive tabernacle, and to find a few pounds a week for current expenses. The trouble came at the next stage, when a popular minister was appointed to a rising township, and on a tide of enthusiasm the Trustees erected an ambitious building, and took out a mortgage to complete payment. Then the connexion was forced to put pressure on the circuit to provide for a married minister, which meant a parsonage. Frequently a congregation in a key position would be found with all its energies absorbed in meeting a high interest bill, and so unable to expand.²²

Such buildings catered for a growing respectability among Methodists. Lineham notes that the whole theory of providing these buildings reflected the "classic Victorian error" that the lack of seating accommodation limited church attendance.²³ That is certainly true, but there is a simpler explanation to add to this; as Hames indicates, it seemed only natural that the population expansion which impelled bold Trust schemes would continue. The pioneering pattern depended on providing cheap, rapid ministration to small communities which could afford no more. The suburban pattern depended on providing stable, substantial ministration to larger and growing communities which were prepared to be ambitious.

A growing church needed more machinery to keep the wheels moving between Conferences, but along with growing efficiency at headquarters...much of the old spontaneity was fading. Pioneering efforts that

would have been undertaken as a matter of course by local initiative twenty or thirty years earlier now required central direction and connexional finance.¹⁴

"Spontaneity" was appropriate to the pioneering field, and not to the suburban field; the reverse applied to consolidation. New Zealand Methodism suffered through trying to succeed in both fields with insufficient resources.

Samuel Lawry¹⁵ was the third Connexional Secretary. Throughout his career, he had an untiring interest in the state of the Church Funds; he was one of the young men who chafed under Morley's grip and opposed the establishment of the Connexional Secretaryship! His continuing interest in the various Funds seems to have helped to bring him to the forefront of the renewed separation movement; much research needs to be done on all the factors bedevilling New Zealand's relations with Australia, but disagreements over various aspects of some Funds was an important cause of difficulty. As the Wesleyan President in 1904, Lawry led the New Zealand delegation to the General Conference, whose President, Rev W.H. Fitchett, a leading Victorian minister renowned for his conservatism, ruled all the New Zealand recommendations out of order. Lawry turned to C.H. Laws and said, "We must now go for separation."¹⁶ The following year, Lawry raised the question in the Methodist section of the Outlook, and his advocacy of the cause led to a successful request for separation in 1910; Lawry's reward was the first Presidency of the united Conference in 1913.

The Connexional Secretaryship was a much more honoured office than the next office to be discussed, that of Organising Secretary of the Home Mission Department. Made full-time in 1909, its influence was much more tenuous, and

very little recognised by the Church. It was occupied in the war years by T.G. Brooke, described by Hames as a "battler"²⁷. He needed to be a battler in this job; everything worked against him. The main problem, of which all other problems were really part, was the preponderance of the "suburban" model in New Zealand Methodism by the time Brooke assumed office. When resources were insufficient to enable Methodism to succeed in both the pioneering and suburban fields, the existing resources tended to be directed to the maintenance and extension of the suburban field. This left the pioneering field struggling to survive, let alone expand. A classic example of this problem is provided by the Centenary Thanksgiving Fund, inaugurated in 1921;²⁸ donors were allowed to allocate their gifts, and so only £100 of nearly £42000 was donated to the Home Missionary Retiring Fund. The Funds which benefitted the most were significant too. The Supernumer Fund did best, followed by the new Theological College; both of these dealt with circuit ministers. They were followed by the Church Building and Loan Fund, which dealt with circuit buildings. Next on the list was the Foreign Mission Fund, which began to receive very greatly increased support in the later stages of the war as the prospect of a separate foreign mission field for New Zealand Methodism opened up.

It is significant that the number of home missionaries began to grow in the 1880's. Known originally as "catechists", and really a survival of the Maori Mission, there were only two in 1877. From then, numbers rose fairly steadily, until in 1914 the Methodist Church boasted forty-eight home missionaries, plus eleven deconesses. Lineham

summarises well their chief advantages.

They were cheap; it was an easy way to train potential ministers and to provide some interim satisfaction for the demand for a second circuit minister or the establishment of a new circuit in rural areas.²⁹

However, such provision proved to be inadequate, and had disastrous latent consequences. The home missionary's stipend was only \$120 per annum, compared with the \$200 per annum of married ministers, which was a fairly worthy reward in 1914. Thus for a married man, home mission work was decidedly a calling; there were few other encouragements to enter it. The work was difficult, arduous, and precarious, and satisfactions were generally meagre. Stories of early home missionaries doing successful pioneering work were not repeated later. Thus there was virtually nothing to entice married men, and comparatively few married men appear to have responded. This would not have been critical had there been demand for home missionaries, but rising standards associated with the progress of the suburban model among Methodists had created a demand. To save money and trained manpower, accepted ministerial candidates often spent their first year as a theological student in a tough home mission station. It was a cruel way of discovering the men with potential and discarding those without potential; but worse, the procession of raw, inexperienced recruits did nothing for the Church's image in these situations.

The Church was too poor to do the right thing by supporting a tried and competent agent in the pioneer situation. She never had enough men to follow up the openings her enthusiasm suggested.³⁰

The Church was perhaps too blind, as well as "too poor to do the right thing". The suburban model had subtly reversed the priorities of an expansionist Church. The ablest,

most experienced men became tied to the well-established circuits, and were expected to provide a settled and intensive pastorate for the circuit's members and adherents. In the missionary Church, this had not applied; it was necessary to be as mobile as possible in order to reach widely scattered and ever-changing communities. But it is important to recognise the strains that such a ministry placed on the ministers. Rural circuits were very tiring, and older ministers were glad to settle down in urban circuits. Besides, most of them were kept very busy by the connexional responsibilities which came with increased experience. But in the absence of experienced men who could really build up a tiny cause into something substantial, and perhaps even self-supporting, the only hope that any particular home mission station would pass beyond its dependent status was for it to be sited in a growing town.

By Brooke's time, the Home Mission Department was expending virtually all its resources on keeping the debts on home mission stations within manageable proportions. A kind of vicious circle appears to have developed. A cause could not free itself of debt, and so it could not provide for a suitable agent, which meant that it could not grow and become self-supporting, which left it in a financially dependent situation, and so on. While the Church perceived the major requirement to be provision of suitable staff and sufficient finance for established urban and suburban circuits, the vicious circle could not be broken. Moreover, most Methodist public statements related more to urban than to rural conditions, which both reflected and reinforced the concentration on the suburban field.

This did not mean that Methodists were unable to see beyond their own back yards. Foreign missions were a respectable and well-supported field of Methodist endeavour. New Zealand Methodism itself had begun as a native mission field, and the missionary and pioneering spirit had not entirely disappeared from New Zealand Methodism even when the suburban field had taken over as the Church's most important field. Thus although the central organisation of the Australasian Connexion's foreign mission work was based within the New South Wales and Queensland Conference, New Zealand Methodism did not neglect this field. But the first quarter of the twentieth century saw an explosion of interest in foreign missions culminating in 1922, when the New Zealand Methodist Church received the Solomon Islands as a separate mission field. The reasons for this development are very well covered by George Carter,³¹ but one of them must be given some attention here.

In 1902, Rev William Slade³² returned from sixteen years' mission work in Fiji. Once home, he added to his circuit work unsparing advocacy of the foreign work, and his message proved generally acceptable in early twentieth century New Zealand Methodism. In fact, his work greatly increased this acceptability, and his advocacy "...sparked off the establishment of the nation wide Women's Missionary Auxiliaries...."³³ More than anything else, it was this movement which symbolised the role of the foreign field in the suburban model; the foreign field was the area into which most of the pioneering and expansionist enthusiasms of the Methodists of the suburban field were directed. As such, the Women's Missionary Auxiliaries were vital in the work of the

suburban field, apart from the influence they exercised in the work of the foreign field:

...they helped to keep alive a warm and practical piety in the congregations. In an age when the church prayer meeting was declining they mobilised the intercessions of the congregations and were a force for good in the spiritual life of the church.³⁴

The third separated office to be discussed here, the Principalship of the Theological College, was crucial for the development of a ministerial body which could rule the Connexion and minister to the needs of the suburban field. Young men had to be trained in order to become effective ministers, and Methodism possessed a training system which was certainly rigorous in its physical, if perhaps not its theological, demands. From 1878 to 1910, theological training was combined with native or secondary education; the lack of resources meant that Methodists were never able to be lavish in the time, money, and manpower which was set apart for theological training. Not until 1911 was New Zealand Methodism prepared to support a separate Principal and Theological College. C.H. Garland was set apart as Principal in 1912, and visiting tutors provided instruction in sacred and secular subjects.

Once the candidate, who was almost invariably single, had been accepted for the ministry, three years of study at the Theological College were required. The course covered biblical and theological subjects, plus a smattering of the humanities, social sciences, mathematics, and elocution. The student also had to preach a trial sermon before an appointed minister, who marked it under a wide range of headings and reported to the District Synod; this was almost invariably a quite fearsome ordeal.

But it was not until recently that the students began to receive really adequate training. Even with two full-time teachers between the wars, the burden was too great. Both Harry Ranston and William T. Blight³⁵ broke down at the beginning of World War 2 and had to be relieved.³⁶ The plight of pre-war theological instruction can thus be imagined. According to C.H. Laws, an early student, it "...was primitive to the point of absurdity, even for those days..."³⁷, and matters improved only slowly. But Methodists never required of their ministers an intellectual standard comparable to that which the Presbyterians sought; it was more important that a warm evangelicalism should be matched by the attainment of a reasonably cultured standard, requirements which a man like Garland fitted perfectly. The really important part of a student's training was the improvement of his general educational standard.³⁸ Very few ministers had university degrees (only ten, plus one student, in 1914),³⁹ and so theological students were expected, where possible, to undertake university studies as part of their training.

After three years of this kind of training, the student was accepted into connexion with the Methodist Church on probation, which generally lasted for four years, but could last longer if performance was unsatisfactory. Probationers had a tough life, and survivors deserved the ordained status that lay at the end of the road! They were thrust out, generally into small town or country areas, where they often lacked adequate supervision and guidance from older ministers. There, still single because of the Church's law, they were expected to build up small, often struggling

causes. Such work took up considerable time and energy, so that it was often difficult to carry out the required reading programme, which was very large (and a list of the probationer's reading had to be supplied each year). On top of this, a heavy course of probationers' examinations were set. Needless to say, such a programme impaired the health of many probationers; but on the other hand, the strenuous testing was probably necessary in order to raise the young men to the best possible standard.

This training produced a ministry characterised by a remarkable theological unanimity. Considering the control which the clergy exercised over New Zealand Methodism, the work of the Church was best enhanced by the development of a consistent ministry, so that the itinerancy would work to the Church's best advantage. The need was supplied by what may be called "evangelical liberalism". As will be seen below,⁴⁰ Methodism did not want to discard the old evangelicalism entirely; Methodist history and tradition was too closely tied to the eighteenth century achievements to allow that to happen. But Methodists wished to acknowledge and utilise the 'best' in liberal theology and philosophy, combining it with the parts of the old evangelicalism which were still acceptable. The evangelical liberalism resulting from the blend had taken over in New Zealand Methodism by 1914, and so strongly entrenched was it among the clergy that it survived the shock of the war fairly comfortably.

The final office to be covered here, the Youth Secretaryship (known under various titles), covered a unique area in the work of the Church. The continuing focus of youth work was how to win each succeeding generation for

Christ, and to secure its membership in and commitment to the Church. There was the Sunday school, very well attended, and seen as an important avenue of evangelism by the late nineteenth century Church. But this often led to abuses inspired by a surfeit of zeal.⁴¹ The aim was to bring the baptised child to the point where commitment to the Church proceeded from a fully mature conviction. Methodism upheld both the doctrine of the baptismal regeneration of infants and the need of an experience of conversion through a personal "decision for Christ".⁴² These two ideas were not easily reconciled, but such difficulties were apparent only in an age where the level of spirituality within the Church seemed to be declining, and where children were not committing themselves to the Church in their adult years. In such a situation, the ritualisation of the conversion process, with its greatly increased concentration on the precise moment of "decision", created confusion and artificiality regarding the spiritual awakening and growth of young people.⁴³ But the alternative - the possibility of entering church membership without any spiritual awareness at all - was even more distasteful.⁴⁴

Methodism found its best solution to this problem in the Bible class movement. It must be remembered that this was not simply an evangelistic movement aiming at adolescents rather than children. The Bible class was the centre of a range of institutionalised activities which occupied the attention of adolescents. This had an important socialising function in a society lacking recreational facilities and economic resources for the young persons, but it could create its own problems.

...this socialising role was mistaken for evangelism by the churches. They assumed that to patronise young people was virtually to convert them. Social circumstances impelled the churches into a "christendom" model, which sought to be inclusive on the least demanding terms. But the net effect was to weaken the church as an instrument for urging men and women to repentance and faith.⁴⁵

While not being wrong, Lineham is perhaps a little harsh here. Hames rightly claims: "Much the most effective evangelism was done by the Bible Classes."⁴⁶ The Bible classes fostered an early reaction against the strict Victorian moralism.⁴⁷ The vigour and vitality of youth was captured, but so was youth's emerging idealism and spiritual awareness. The secret of the success was that it was an autonomous lay movement; the youth themselves were responsible for its success. In a bold move, the 1905 Conference set apart a young minister to organise it into a Young Men's Forward Movement, but after two changes of Organising Secretary and five years of activity, the office was discontinued until after the war for lack of finance. Furthermore, the Young Men's Bible Classes were decimated by the war. But the movement survived and thrived on its own. Hames captures its spirit admirably:

It was a Movement, it was going places, it was largely spontaneous, and it belonged to the young people themselves. It was raw, it was lively and propagandist and happy, and it did untold good. It was progressive and evangelistic without (usually) being unduly pious by the standard of those days, and a whole generation of young people found spiritual freedom within it. It was their own.⁴⁸

The vitality of the movement is especially enhanced when the domination of New Zealand Methodism by the clergy is remembered. The Bible class movement was almost the only exception to the Methodist method, in this period, whereby successful facets of the Church's work required ministerial

initiative, direction, and control. This autonomy became a problem in the 1930's, when the movement seemed to become a breeding ground for pacifism;⁴⁹ but in the 1910's, the influence was most beneficial.

New Zealand Methodism had just united when war began in 1914, but it had a very stable hierarchical structure. Legislative power was vested in the Conference, but this in turn was ruled by a small group of able and experienced ministers who also controlled the Church's work in the Districts. This was most significant in a Church dominated by a cohesive clergy. In 1914 and throughout the war years, the Church was run mostly by senior ministers, who retired soon afterwards and were replaced by a new ministerial generation in its middle years. This senior group also controlled the separated offices, which directed much of the specialised work that lay outside the scope of the circuit ministry.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER I

1. Although this Church was officially known as "The Methodist Church of Australasia in New Zealand" after 1902, the title given here will be followed for the sake of clarity. The name change was related to New Zealand Methodism's connection with Australia. In 1894, the Australasian Wesleyan General Conference granted permission for Annual Conferences to consummate Methodist Union within their areas of jurisdiction. New Zealand Methodism took this up, but achieved only partial union, the Primitives declining the terms. But in Australia, full Methodist Union was completed in 1902, and so the change of name was decreed. Had the New Zealand Wesleyans not changed their name, that would have amounted to secession.
2. For this and the following rules, see Rules and Regulations of the Methodist Church of New Zealand (hereafter known as Book of Laws), Christchurch, 1916, pp.29-30.
3. 'The Australian Churches in the Great War: Attitudes and Activities of the Major Churches', Canberra, Australian National University, 1975 (unpublished Ph.D. thesis), p.14.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. MCNZ, 1916, p.117.
8. MCNZ, 1917, p.114.
9. For these rules, see Book of Laws, pp.68-9
10. MCNZ, 1881
11. MCNZ, 1914, p.118.
12. Book of Laws, pp.72-3
13. For the gist of the controversy, see B. Gadd "William Morley 1842-1926: A Statesman of God among Australasian Methodists: His Work in New Zealand", PWHS(NZ), vol.20 nos.1-2, March 1964, pp.43-4.
14. Entered the ministry in 1887; President in 1910 and 1922; Principal of the Theological College 1920-30; Chairman of the District six times; became a Supernumerary in 1931.
15. Entered the ministry in 1891; President in 1917; Chairman of the District four times; Organising Secretary of the Foreign Mission Department 1919-32; became a Supernumerary in 1933.
16. Entered the ministry in 1880; President in 1906; Organising Secretary of the Home Mission Department 1909-23; Chairman of the District four times; became a Supernumerary in 1924.
17. Entered the ministry in 1881; President in 1901; Principal of the Theological College 1912-18; Secretary of the Century Commemoration Fund

- 1899-1900; Chairman of the District eleven times; died in 1918.
- 18 Entered the ministry in 1900; President in 1936; Youth Secretary 1922-38; became a Supernumerary in 1941
- 19 Entered the ministry in 1903; President in 1933; Superintendent of Maori Missions 1920-3; General Superintendent of the Home Mission Department 1924-38; became a Supernumerary in 1939.
- 20 Gadd, p.35.
- 21 Out of the Common Way, p.63.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Lineham, p.8.
- 24 Out of the Common Way, p.111.
- 25 Entered the ministry in 1877; President in 1904 and 1913; Connexional Secretary 1911-26; Chairman of the District four times; became a Supernumerary in 1927.
- 26 Parker, J.W. (ed.), Reverend C.H. Laws, B.A., D.D.: Memoir and Addresses, Wellington, Reeds, 1954, p.50.
- 27 Out of the Common Way, p.111.
- 28 For details, see Coming of Age, p.46
- 29 Lineham, p.8.
- 30 Out of the Common Way, pp.112- 13
- 31 See A Family Affair: A Brief Survey of New Zealand Methodism's Involvement in Mission Overseas 1822-1972, PHWS(NZ), vol.28, nos. 3-4, 1973, pp.96-103.
- 32 Entered the ministry in 1881; President in 1907; foreign missionary in Fiji 1886-1901; Chairman of the District twice, died in 1916.
- 33 Ibid., p.97.
- 34 Out of the Common Way, p.126.
- 35 Entered the ministry in 1917; President in 1946; Theological Tutor 1931-9; Editor, NZMT, April 1947-1961; Chairman of the District thirteen times; became a Supernumerary in 1957.
- 36 Coming of Age, p.80.
- 37 Out of the Common Way, p.77.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 See MCNZ, 1914, pp.13, 133-9.
- 40 See below, Ch.8. pp.232-7,
- 41 Out of the Common Way, pp.57, 83.
- 42 For the preceding argument, see Ibid., pp.120-1.
- 43 See the story of the "conversion" of two "clear-thinking" teenage girls (ibid., p.89).
- 44 Coming of Age, p.54
- 45 Lineham, p.11.
- 46 Coming of Age, p.14.
- 47 Note Hames' delightful quotation from a contemporary Bible class member: "when young men are urged to put off the old man, they are afraid they are being required to put on the old woman." (Out of the Common Way, p.123)
- 48 Ibid., p.122.

49 Coming of Age, p.77.

PART I • JUSTIFYING THE WAR

CHAPTER II

THE INFLUENCE OF TRADITIONAL THOUGHT

The growth of pacifist belief in the Methodist Church after World War I was largely determined by the disenchantment with war as a means of securing peace that the experience of a large-scale war generated. Before World War I, the occasional necessity of war was almost never questioned, though this did not mean that war was glorified. This chapter will examine traditional Methodist thought on war, showing how it was applied, in the Anglo-Boer War and in the first two months of World War I, to justify British participation in war.

1. War and the Golden Age

It is necessary to begin by noting that there is some distortion involved in examining Methodist attitudes to war in any detail. The question of war aroused little interest among Methodists before World War I, except during both the Anglo-Boer War and the agitation from 1910 regarding compulsory military training. The Methodist journals discussed the subject very rarely, and mostly in response to an international crisis. Thus Methodist reaction to the issue was episodic, and Methodist attitudes to war tended to lack coherence. It is misleading, therefore, to view these attitudes as a logical philosophy. Rather, they were a set of ideas taken mainly from the surrounding social environment, and applied either to decry war altogether, or to give patriotic support to Britain's cause.

But the assumption that Methodists never thought about

war at all is wrong. Methodists opposed war in principle, stressing that the Gospel of Jesus Christ was a gospel of peace. They earnestly awaited the prophesied time when there would be no more wars or preparations for war.¹ This Golden Age was to be ushered in through the activity of Christians, as W.J. Williams envisioned.

If the millennium of peace is ever to arrive the impeachment of war must take a practicable shape here and now. The task of elevating human sentiment and improving human nature must be undertaken in good earnest. The devilish idea of settling international difficulties by leading masses of men against each other to shed each other's blood must be denounced as a masterpiece of infernal craft. The mask of glory must be torn from a profession the necessity for which is a reproach to our Christian civilisation. The Pagan gospel of hate must be discarded for the Christian gospel of love, and national righteousness must be insisted upon as the only true safeguard of national rights. Such a task may be ridiculed by some as Utopian, but not by those who recognise the principles of Christian morality as applicable not only to individual affairs, but also to affairs of State.²

The 'Pagan gospel of hate' that 'Christian morality' so firmly rejected was summed up in the old aphorism, "If you wish for peace, prepare for war." Rev Lewis Hudson³ summarised an American newspaper's comments on the launching of an American battleship, where President Taft called for two new battleships annually as a sure defence against war:

The argument that these great "dogs of war" are conservators of peace [is like] two bulldogs snarling and showing their teeth each to other [sic]. The more threatening the fang, the less fear of attack. The argument of the fang is hardly worthy of a nation deigning to call itself Christian. [...] When the so-called Christian nations are prepared to apply the principles of Christianity in their international relationships, the present policy of national armament will cease, and the enormous sums expended on war material will be devoted to more remunerative and humane objects.⁴

Arbitration was recognised as a means towards the successful application of Christian principles in

international relationships. Rev Hugh Price Hughes, a famous Welsh Wesleyan minister, asserted that it was a Christian's duty to disapprove of war, '...and to foster among all nations such a spirit as would lead to the settlement of all international disputes by arbitration.'⁵ Williams commented that despite all the practical difficulties of this theory, '...its acceptance is inevitable as a condition of a consistent and whole-hearted acceptance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.'⁶

As with individuals within a nation, nations had to learn to bring their disputes before an international court of law, instead of using force. This court's decisions would be upheld by all nations acting together; any nation that flouted the court's rulings would be opposed by all other nations. But this would not necessarily prevent war; in order to be effective, it needed to be upheld by a growing spirit of unwillingness for and rejection of war among peoples.

Hopes were being raised before 1914 that arbitration could indeed be successful. An increasing number of minor and major disputes were being settled by arbitration in the quarter-century before World War I. Perhaps people were beginning to realise:

This frightful struggle for pre-eminence in naval and military strength, is the fostering of a spirit that is simply diabolical, and it merits the heaviest condemnation of the entire Christian Church. It is an insult to Christian principle to affirm that the glory of England, or any other nation, is bound up with the maintenance of the arts of war. A war in self-defence has proved, under the circumstances, to be a painful necessity, but, that war should be looked upon as inevitable among civilized nations, and even regarded as the occasion in which the glory of a nation is most conspicuously displayed, is a sentiment that bears the base brand of barbarism.⁷

Such sentiments, to a large extent, reflected those of the (British) Peace Society at that time, even including the claim of the occasional necessity of war in self-defence.⁸ Methodism, however, hardly figures at all in accounts of the activities of groups with pacifist leanings at the turn of the century. In fact, Methodist tradition pointed in the opposite direction. Methodism had inherited John Wesley's strong Tory loyalism, and despite the liberalism which developed in later nineteenth century Methodism, this Tory element was never lost, especially among the Wesleyans. Any semblance of a pacifist tradition in Methodism existed only among a few Primitives; New Zealand Methodism, certainly, consistently upheld Britain's cause.

Were Methodists, then, not serious in their preference for peace over war? To assume this is to misunderstand how common the Methodist position was in the contemporary social situation, both religious and secular:

...when coined in the first decade of the twentieth century, pacifism meant no more than being in favour of peace and arbitration and opposed to militarism and settling disputes by war....⁹

This was the Methodist position exactly. To Methodists, it was quite possible for this pacifism¹⁰ to be held in conjunction with imperialist loyalism. Methodists felt that war could serve the ends of righteousness.

This is demonstrated in a sermon preached by Rev W. Scorgie on the righteousness of war,¹¹ in which he stated his belief that war is natural; the more successful is sin, as a social poison, the more surely it will destroy itself.

No civilisation can carry more than a given amount of injustice, crime, and corruption. When that amount is exceeded the bonds burst, the scaffolding falls, the peoples break loose, and cities, states, and empires are rolled into ruin.¹²

War is also necessary: for defence of one's family, home, and country; for reconstruction, replacing old ideas, customs, institutions, and laws with new ideas, ideals, and movements; for expansion for an increasing population; or for progress in an isolated nation.

Furthermore, said Scorgie, war is righteous. Firstly, Christianity emphatically condemns the motives which so often cause war - 'selfish greed, ambition, tyranny, vanity, oppression, and pride.'¹³ But the side which is free of these motives can fight a righteous war. Secondly, a great nation is obliged to '...repress evil, crush tyranny, check greed, protect the weak, and punish persecution on the part of other nations.'¹⁴ Thirdly, despite war's evil effects as a devastating scourge, the spirit of sacrifice in which the individual faces death for his country allows war to attain the qualities of 'moral character, heroic service, Christian sacrifice.' Lastly, all earthly wars climax in the final battle between the forces of Christ and Satan, where Satan is overthrown, sin is abolished, and the perfect kingdom of righteousness is established.

According to Scorgie's view, war was the consequence of sin; as such, it destroyed a sin-corrupted civilisation and restored the moral balance of the world. It is almost

impossible to equate this with the view, also held by Methodists, that war itself was sinful. But it is wrong to expect consistency in Methodist thought on this issue before World War I; Methodists simply did not see it as important enough to warrant such attention, and so conflicting beliefs could be held without any awareness that this was the case. If opinions like Scorgie's seem puerile eighty years later, this is a tribute to the impact on the twentieth century consciousness of two huge international wars, numerous smaller wars, and the development of nuclear technology.

The ideological defence of war was to gain considerably in sophistication in the inter-war era, as the debate on war became increasingly important in the Church. The lack of correspondence objecting to Scorgie's views does not necessarily demonstrate that his views were widely accepted. Rather, it shows that the righteousness of war was not a central issue for Methodists before World War I. No compulsion to attempt to strengthen the case for the righteousness of war was felt.

2. The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902

It was only under the pressure of an actual war that Methodism's real attitude became clear. The outbreak of World War I engendered a very intense and almost universal outbreak of fervent patriotism for God, King, and Country (which meant Britain and the Empire more often than it meant New Zealand). The intensity of this patriotism is best understood by a comparison with Methodism's reaction to the Anglo-Boer War fifteen years earlier.

Even before this war began, it was declared to be both inevitable and just on England's part. The Uitlanders'

request for a share in government in Transvaal was held to be reasonable.

The Uitlanders largely represent the intelligence, virtue and capital of the Republic of which Kruger is President. Yet they are treated as nobodies: worse - dangerous aliens. They are made to supply, through taxation, the most of the revenue of the Republic, and are yet treated by the Boer as political nonentities.¹⁵

Moreover, the Dutch who lived in the English colonies were treated much more fairly by their English rulers than were the Uitlanders in Transvaal. Such a view did not blind Methodists to possible English wickedness; the Jameson Raid in 1895 was denounced both at the time and with the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War.¹⁶ However, this did not justify Boer intransigence and aggression.¹⁷

If ever a war could be justified on our side it is this. Self-defence is said to be the one thing that justifies the sword; and surely it is emphatically self-defence in this case.¹⁸

The 1900 Wesleyan Conference strongly and confidently upheld this view of the war.

The Conference rejoices in the patriotic feeling that has been expressed by New Zealand in connection with the war in South Africa, at the heroism shown by her contingents, and the liberal response of the Colony to the appeal for funds, and especially to that on behalf of those suffering from the struggle. It affirms its belief that Great Britain had no alternative but to draw the sword on behalf of our oppressed fellow-subjects in the Transvaal, as well as to maintain the rights of the Crown, and while praying that the complete and decisive victory of our forces may soon end the bloodshed, is thankful that the evil has been so far overruled for good in the intense loyalty to the throne, and the closer union of all parts of the Empire.¹⁹

The Advocate's report of the Conference adds that the motion was 'carried by acclamation, with great enthusiasm.'²⁰

Opposition to the war and to this view of it, however, dictated that a more detailed defence of the righteousness

of this war should be made. H.P. Hughes asserted that the war's most vociferous opponents were living in a 'dream world'.²¹ England was justified in fighting because of: the Boers' cruel treatment of the natives; the Boers' harsh and unjust treatment of the Uitlanders; the Boers' refusal to treat their subjects as did the English in their colonies; and the Boers' alleged fomenting of race hatred in South Africa. The war was inevitable because

The Boer policy of a military oligarchy, founded upon slavery, and repudiating the equality of all civilised men, would inevitably have come into collision with the British policy of protecting native races, of treating all Europeans alike. [...] If [President Kruger] had been willing to accept the elementary principles of Christian civilisation, all the Jingoists in the world would have been unable to break the peace.²²

Destruction, therefore, of Kruger's 'corrupt tyranny' was necessary, and England was fit to carry this out: 'The British flag, with all its stains, is the hope of freedom and humanity.'²³

Not everyone agreed. The brilliant temperance orator, T.E. Taylor, M.H.R., opposed the war as imperialist.²⁴ One correspondent attempted to show that the Boers believed that England had intended war, and that its actions had inevitably precipitated it.²⁵ Another correspondent, Mr D.J. Aldersley, opposed the war and all war as an unjustifiable rejection of the Christian ethic of peacemaking.²⁶ But such views appear to have been rejected by the vast majority of Methodists.

This war exposed many issues dealing with the righteousness and justification of a war that were to re-emerge in World War I. In retrospect, Aldersley was right in criticising the attitude of the representatives of the

"Prince of Peace"; the Wesleyan Conference's resolution, he claimed, contained 'no note of regret'. The nature of this war and of all modern wars tended to erode the relevance of the traditional Christian doctrine of the just war. This was shown most clearly in the early months of the war, when the British suffered some reverses. How could the side whose cause was just be defeated?

"Ian Maclaren" (pen-name for another famous British preacher, Rev John Watson) attempted to explain this by asserting that all nations were subject to a general law of righteousness, even those fighting for a just cause: if the nation sins, it will be punished.²⁷ So these reverses were the punishment for England's great sin, arrogance of heart, which had aroused the hatred of other nations. Furthermore, there was an increasingly greedy materialism and an increasing disregard for God's commandments. Because the Boers were both readier and more devout, they would be hard to beat. National triumph required national repentance. But others firmly rejected the view that the Boers were any more devout than the British; a correspondent attempted to explain hatred of Britain as jealousy at the strength which righteousness had secured for Britain over the centuries.²⁸ The evangelical justification of Britain's involvement in a war tended to require the development of a theory of the war's meaning that did not correspond to the facts. This problem, repeated on a much larger scale in World War I, was to undermine the acceptability of the just war doctrine after World War I.

3. The Imperialist Ideology and the European War:
August-September 1914

World War I engendered a much deeper and more intense sense of involvement among New Zealanders than the Anglo-Boer War ever did. Much more was at stake. This was no volunteer expedition to strike a final blow against an upstart little country daring to oppose the might and right of the British Empire. This was a full-scale war in Europe against a formidable military and naval opponent. The result was by no means certain. So the war called forth a deeper commitment to God, King, and Country, and there soon emerged a grim determination to prosecute the war by whatever means were necessary to achieve victory. Such were the dangers for the soldiers, and such was the risk of losing this great conflict, that at times the commitment amounted almost to unqualified support. Such support for the pro-British cause was impossible in the Anglo-Boer War, because a much lesser degree of sacrifice was needed to achieve victory. The rest of this chapter will examine the early justifications for Britain's participation in World War I and the assumptions on which they were based. Later chapters will examine the changing attitudes to war which were caused by the need to explain the scale of apparent evil which was unleashed.

The sudden onset of an international crisis in July 1914 surprised Methodists. W.J. Williams wasted no time in strongly condemning a crisis that, according to his outline, had developed from a small quarrel because of the network of alliances and the cultivation of the war spirit:

And so the wretched quarrel, beginning in an Austrian cockpit, spreads like a prairie fire from one nation to another, until the whole of Europe threatens to be lapped in the flames of a mighty conflagration. And this in the twentieth century of Christian Civilisation! God have mercy upon us! What have the Apostles of Christianity been about,

that they have not succeeded in creating an ideal that, on the ground of humanity alone, would have rendered impossible such a colossal barbarism as that in the shadow of which the whole world to-day is trembling?²⁹

Why, then, did Williams, and Methodists generally, turn from such a strong blast against the wickedness inherent in the crisis to loyal support for Britain's cause as soon as Britain declared war? Williams spoke for nearly all Methodists in the next issue of the Methodist Times:

On what seem...shamefully insufficient reasons, Germany has launched on Europe the fearful thunderbolts of war, and on grounds that commend themselves to the judgment of most people throughout the Empire, the British Government has reluctantly drawn the sword against what it considers an unwarrantable German aggression.³⁰

Was such a decision made solely on the basis of an assessment of German claims? An examination of editorial reactions to previous European crisis reveals an interesting pattern. In 1887, there seemed to Williams to be a strong possibility of a Russo-Turkish war, and Franco-German relations were poor. His editorial comment on that crisis was very similar to his blast at the international crisis of July 1914. He criticised the Church for its failure, after so long, to have any appreciable influence on national affairs, and claimed that loss of faith in God under such conditions was no surprise.³¹

However, in any crisis where Britain's interests were at stake, editors were quick to uphold Britain's cause. Rev. William C. Oliver's³² loyal support for Britain's stand in the Anglo-Boer War has already been mentioned.³³ Williams asserted Britain's right to defend its Indian possessions against a Russian threat in 1885.³⁴ So Williams' original blast against the crisis in 1914 shows that he saw no threat

to British interests in that crisis. Why, then, was this attitude not continued after Britain's declaration of war?

The question is to some extent misleading, for it tends to view the reactions of the time in terms of later standpoints. Most contemporaries saw no conflict between God's cause and Britain's cause. Methodists were, traditionally, strongly loyalist. Moreover, the British Empire, for all its faults, was seen as embodying the virtues of civilisation (though it did not lack some of its vices too). This did not mean that the Government never indulged in any kind of wickedness. But for Methodists, it meant that their Church's relation to the State was that of a concerned friend, not a critical opponent. Whenever the State was in need, the Church supported it, but the Church reserved the right to make criticisms and representations in return for this support.

However, this claimed right did not prevent Methodists giving enthusiastic support to the British Empire. In this heyday of imperialism, most Methodists espoused the contemporary imperialist ideology. E.P. Malone's work on the exposition of the imperialist ideology to a generation of schoolchildren in the New Zealand School Journal³⁵ shows important similarities with the thinking of some leading Methodists, let alone the average Methodist layperson.

The Empire was a moral concept. It gloried in being founded on liberty and justice; and the citizen was to be prepared to sacrifice himself to defend these principles - or rather, the Empire's interests, as the two were synonymous. Britain's moral superiority was asserted as fact; Britain had taken Christianity and civilisation everywhere, ending

barbarism in many places, and enabling all races living in the Empire to enjoy liberty and justice unmatched by any other nation. Thus great responsibility rested on all citizens to further the cause of the Empire. Wherever poverty and suffering, ignorance and darkness existed, it was the solemn duty of imperial citizens to relieve the burdens of others, so that the Empire would be united against 'the enemy'. Aggressive war was always condemned; imperial citizens were to foster co-operation among nations and the settlement of international problems by arbitration. However, the asserted existence of an unnamed 'enemy' implied a belief in the probability of war, and so imperial citizens would possibly find the battlefield to be their ultimate duty. The imperialist ideology was an ideology of struggle, against forces unnamed but assumed. Such an ideology was very well suited to a defence of the righteousness of Britain's involvement in any war. How close was this ideology to Methodist views?

Among the British monarchy's milestones in the thirty years before World War 1, Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee in 1897 inspired the greatest rejoicing among Methodists. Rev Paul W. Fairclough³⁶ waxed bombastic in his peroration of the glories of the British flag:

You have heard of Magna Charta. Behold Maxima Charta! [....] Whatever is greatest in human achievements, noblest in human aspirations, or most coveted in human life, this flag means.³⁷

More specifically, Fairclough mentioned religious liberty, equal justice, civil liberty, liberty of knowledge, national security, and national wealth. But these benefits were given to Britain for its world-wide mission as the greatest blessing ever bestowed on the world.

Rev George Bond³⁸ agreed with these sentiments, in less overblown language.³⁹ The British Constitution was a pledge of protection for the weak, liberty for the slave, the redress of oppressive wrongs, and civil and religious liberties. All distinctions of race and creed were forgotten in a united Empires's pledge of loyalty to Queen and Country; such unity, maintained by the righteousness which exalts a nation,⁴⁰ would make the Empire a power to be reckoned with, and do much to maintain peace. Behind Britain's commercial prosperity, military strength, and political supremacy lay Britain's faith in God. From all this, Bond concluded that

...our National blessings imply National responsibilities. [....] ...at our hands He demands the carrying to a successful issue the great works of social and moral reform, the enfranchisement and education of the masses, and above all the spread of the Gospel. Let us prize our heritage of liberty..., remembering at how great a cost that heritage was purchased.⁴¹

Thus leading Methodists happily accepted and expounded what Malone has identified as the imperialist ideology, though religious significance at best implied in the School Journal was given to imperial matters. The martial aspect was not emphasised, but it was present; and under the pressure of war, the citizen's duty on the battlefield was quite easily added to the list of his responsibilities. The extent to which New Zealand Methodists were prepared to die for the Empire because of their Methodist beliefs, as against their imperialist beliefs, is unknown. Methodism had become synonymous with liberal imperialism; few Methodists would have been even aware of any distinction. Even in those opposed to the Anglo-Boer War, there seems to

have been a tendency towards acceptance of the liberal imperialist ideology; that war was condemned because it was seen as an imperialist and aggressive war. Only the stand of someone like D.J. Aldersley could genuinely be classified as non-imperialist. He rejected altogether the idea that war is beneficial:

...the presence of a huge military system always has been a menace to the peace of nations, and can never secure "goodwill amongst men," which lies at the foundation of "peace on earth."⁴²

Later, he put it still more strongly: 'War is the abandonment of the principles of Christianity, and the preparation for it recognises no religion.'⁴³ But very few Methodists agreed with Aldersley, in his anticipation of the later pacifist ideology, in 1914.

From the outset of World War 1, Germany was a readily identifiable enemy. There seems to have been little effort among Methodists either to defend Germany's actions or to question the justice of the war altogether. A letter was soon received questioning the general justifiability of war.⁴⁴ Williams refused such correspondence on the plea of consideration for the feelings of readers whose relatives had enlisted. No correspondence was received dissenting from this decision,⁴⁵ and during the rest of the war, only two letters were received which dissented from the official Methodist viewpoint in these matters.⁴⁶ For the Methodists with imperialist views, Germany was clearly in the wrong; Serbia seemed to have been forgotten.

The original complaint against Germany was its invasion of Belgium. This was not specifically stated when Williams first expounded his justification for Britain's involvement,⁴⁷ but it was soon stressed as a defence for New Zealand's

annexation of Samoa on Britain's behalf.⁴⁸ Germany
 '...wantonly provoked this cruel war in the interests of ...
 national aggrandisement.'⁴⁹ Germany was guilty of '... one of
 the blackest crimes in the world's history, against which
 the blood of the many thousands slain will cry out in the
 demand for judgment.'⁵⁰ It was necessary and right for Britain
 to annex Samoa:

No lust of territory has stained the motive of
 Britain... [....] On the side of Britain, it is a
 battle for truth and righteousness if ever one such
 was fought on the face of the earth.'⁵¹

Surveying the German invasion of France, Williams claimed
 that the intervention of the British Empire had prevented
 Germany from reaching Paris, committing Germany to a war
 which would only result in a 'crushing' and deserved defeat:
 '... Germany [will] go under ... "unwept, unhonoured and
 unsung," as the victim of its own godless and brutal
 ambition."⁵²

In these sentiments, traditional Methodist
 justifications for Britain's involvement in a war were
 expressed, but in an extended and absolutised form. The
 claim that Britain was fighting for 'truth and
 righteousness' reflected Oliver's claim in 1899 that 'if
 ever a war could be justified on our side it is this.'⁵³ But
 Oliver claimed that Britain was justified in fighting
 because the war was 'emphatically self-defence', no other
 motive being justifiable. The difference was not great, but
 it was significant. Already, World War 1 was seen as the
 greatest war in history, and already the distinction between
 Germany's wickedness and Britain's righteousness was being
 drawn with an absolutism susceptible to something
 approaching xenophobia.

But whatever susceptibilities may have existed in these early views towards damning Germany as solely responsible for the war, Williams was aware of British sins. Commenting on the President of Conference's call to prayer for the war, he asked:

Is there no sign of moral and religious decadence in the British Empire? Is Mammon-worship wholly unknown in what prides itself on being the most Christian of all the nations? And if punishment through this war is a token of God's judgment against wrong-doing, is not Britain getting its share of it, and thereby showing that it is in the same condemnation?⁵⁴

There was enough wickedness among Britons to be sorrowful for; thus '... in our prayer for victory we shall do well not to intimate to the Almighty that victory is the prescriptive right of the armies of the Allies.'⁵⁵ Carrying out God's will was more important than realising one's strongest wish, and since

God is infinitely more concerned for the triumph of the cause of righteousness than we ever can be, ...we may safely leave it with Him to decide on which side the cause of righteousness lies. It will be found, possibly, that such a cause defies the limits of any geographical boundary-line.⁵⁶

For Williams, God's will was mysterious, and his favour was not to be assumed. Thus, when praying for those in need, Christians were to see those they prayed for through the eyes of God, who recognises no nationality.

...the chief value of the confessions we make and the prayers we offer under the pressure of war, is that we are brought into the atmosphere in which moral values are recognised as supreme.⁵⁷

When this happened, they would be brought so near to God that they would see the value which God puts on human brotherhood; this recognition would make war morally impossible forever.

Two things should be emphasised from this whole

argument. Firstly, the stress on the Empire's sins laid the foundations of the Church's campaign for national righteousness as an essential condition of national triumph. In practice, the repentant energies that confession was to generate were channelled mostly into the prohibition campaign. Secondly, the beliefs expressed about God's sovereignty did not lead to the necessary morale-boosting confidence in the righteousness of the Allied cause. The suggestion that the cause of righteousness might transcend national boundaries was very rarely made again during the war, by Williams or any other Methodist. From this point onwards, anti-German language became increasingly virulent as convictions of the righteousness of the Allied cause developed into intransigence. The task, from this point, was to prevent the diabolisation of Germany from becoming so frenzied, and the vindication of Britain from becoming so strident, that evangelical theology was abandoned in the process.

Some indication of the extent to which feelings on this matter deepened in the early stages of the war may be obtained by examining the reaction to the address of the retiring President, Rev. Samuel J Serpell,⁵⁸ at the 1915 Methodist Conference. He began by claiming that

...it is not really the supremacy of Germany or the supremacy of the Allies that is at stake. There is... a deeper and a truer reading of this great world movement. It is, in its ultimate issue, a question of the supremacy of God against principalities and powers who have been challenging His rulership and authority in His own world. This great contest is not one of flesh and blood. That is what the sense-eye beholds. The spirit-eye beholds a contest between the powers of darkness and light - between truth and a lie, between God and the devil. These are but agents - agents in God's hands - hands of retribution - hands of judgment - hands of chastisement - yet hands of mercy - hands of healing

- hands of salvation, held out to a world that had denied, despised, and rejected him. This war is but the result of the nations' rejection of Christ, and this national sin is meeting with visible national retribution.⁵⁹

Those who had faith in God saw this great event as '... the vindication and triumph of eternal moral and spiritual ideas and ideals that this world ... was in danger of losing by its folly and its sin.'⁶⁰ The long period of peace had brought prosperity, but also worldliness; godliness had been superseded by materialism. Doctrinal toleration had eroded the fire and challenge of the Christian faith, till God was almost lost altogether, being saved intellectually only as 'an emasculated, emaciated emanation or immanence.' But evil and hell had been discarded, and the 'proud achievement of Culture' proclaimed in its place.

Now they realised that Satan was still working in the world, and they realised that God too was working through this war, forcing himself on their attention. War was God's scourge, a weapon never used unnecessarily, but needed to punish the world and purge it of its atheism. Serpell rejected all facile notions of the causation of the war which blamed Germany alone.

It is all very well to curse the Kaiser, and lay all this evil to his charge. It is easy to pursue the Prussian with our accusations, and enumerate all the evils of militarism, and of a military caste. It is difficult to apportion blame and responsibility in the course of the great world historical process of which this war between the nations is but a part.⁶¹

Indeed, '... Germany and her Kaiser [may] be punitive and purging instruments in the lives of the nations.'⁶²

What, specifically, was wrong? What lay behind the disregard for God and the espousal of selish materialism? The old Gospel had been abandoned. No longer did they preach

that "sin is a curse to any people."⁶³ They had lost their fear of both God and Satan. They had placed their faith in naval strength. They had tried to heal the world's suffering with an humanitarian gospel and schemes of social service. However, 'Not the world's suffering, but the world's sin is our objective, and for this, the great remedy is not humanitarian benevolence, but the Cross and Blood of Calvary.'⁶⁴ The Gospel was a declaration of war on the world, the flesh, and the devil. Peace on earth would come only after rendering "Glory to God in the Highest."⁶⁵ Efforts to humanise the Gospel had simply emptied it of its divine element.

...the church in these days has been pressed into a new conformity ... to the standards, wishes, and demands of the world. She has been tempted to win the world by acceding to the world's demands, by catering for the world's applause. She has widened her doors, broadened her message, yielded to the obliteration of the distinction between sacred and secular, and so lost her power to stir within the community any real deep and wholesome sense of sin.⁶⁶

What was the remedy? 'The Church must be non-conformist as regards the world. We need the old spirit of Methodism back in the new conditions of the twentieth century'⁶⁷ Serpell called for "non-conformity" and "transformation" to be their watchwords, along the lines of Romans 12:1.

"... Christianity is essentially a struggle for an independent spiritual life. It can mould society from above ..., but it can never entangle itself with any human institutions without disastrous results to itself and them. The new birth is admission into the citizenship of a spiritual kingdom, and the citizens of a spiritual kingdom must maintain complete independence in face of all external conditions".

Hence the Church of Jesus Christ must ever be engaged in war.⁶⁸

This was necessary if the pulpit was to recover the note of assurance, conviction, and authority robbed from it by the

claims of Culture, Historical Criticism, and Science.

In conclusion, Serpell asserted that behind the confused chaos of the times lay great possibilities of new life; the Church, as Jesus Christ's representatives, were to meet the situation. And since the Transfigured Christ was among them, they would succeed. '[Jesus is] the world's Cure. Its malady is sin. Its pains, its sorrows, its wounds, its hurts are but the birth pangs of a new age.⁶⁹ The prayer that Christ taught, "Thy kingdom come", was being answered.

In this address, Serpell applied very thoroughly the principle that '...the present war is God's chosen method for punishing the nations which have denied His claims....'⁷⁰ His position was in many ways similar to that of "Ian MacLaren", in expounding on God's judgements on Britain's transgressions early in the Anglo-Boer War.⁷¹ The address was received very angrily. W. J. Williams, while indicating that there was much disagreement with Serpell's views on the cause and purpose of the war, praised the courage and faithfulness shown in the address.⁷² But other opinions were far less charitable. It was called 'blasphemy', even by Rev. George H. Mann, a noted "anti-militarist".⁷³ What caused this unfavourable reaction?

It is impossible to discover, from the address, what was Serpell's own opinion on the righteousness of Britain's cause. His assertion of the necessity for the Church to be 'ever engaged in war' refers not to earthly wars, but to the struggle for purity of evangelical doctrine and spirituality. The evidence can support a number of viewpoints. There is an outside chance that he was an absolute pacifist; the evidence does not contradict this possibility.

But it is most unlikely, since there were very few pacifists among Methodist ministers before World War 1.⁷⁴ More realistically, he may have been against this particular war, whatever the reasons may have been; as for the previous option, the evidence does not contradict the possibility. But again, this is unlikely.

It is probable that Serpell believed in the righteousness of Britain's cause. Despite this, his views of the war did not match those of most Conference members. The suggestion that Germany might be God's means of bringing Britain to its senses (and its knees) did not appeal to people whose attitude to Germany had hardened considerably since the war started. The suggestion that the war was God's means of recalling the Church to evangelical purity was little better received. Already anti-German sentiment in New Zealand had developed to the point where a correspondent could criticise the lack of prayer for the enemy, and especially the attitude that said, "It is not in human nature to pray for fiends in human form."⁷⁵ Instead of strongly condemning Germany, Serpell took widely held anti-German beliefs and suggested another way of viewing the war, a way that ignored German wickedness and highlighted British transgressions and ecclesiastical shortcomings. The anger arose simply because Serpell did not say what his audience wanted to hear.

Yet Serpell's interpretation of the cause and purpose of the war soundly reflected traditional Methodist thought on war, as Williams recognised. Indeed, his exposition had similarities with Williams' editorial on the presidential call to prayer a few months earlier.⁷⁶ But as with Williams'

early editorial justifications for Britains' cause, there was a tendency to absolutise the conflict which was precariously balanced with the doctrine of the just war. Serpell had not carried this absolutising tendency far, but other Methodists had done so; thus Serpell's rigour was out of place in a situation where an attack on the Church's failings could not create or sustain the morale needed for Methodists to participate fully in New Zealand's war effort. By this time, most Methodists had found it necessary to explain the cause and purpose of the war in terms of another factor: German militarism.

Serpell survived the Conference's disapproval of his address. He was a much-loved pastor and a renowned individualist, and his services as President received special mention in his obituary, which perhaps indicates that the anger did not last.⁷⁷ His last years were saddened by the deaths of his wife, and then his only son (in the war). As for the 1915 Conference, the development and hardening of attitudes towards Germany was mildly reflected in its resolution on the war.

While deploring the appeal to brute force in differences between rational beings, and mourning over the horrors and miseries of the present world-wide conflict, this Conference is profoundly convinced that Great Britain, is absolutely innocent of the awful guilt of letting slip the dogs of war, and has a cause transparently just before God and the nations. We rejoice in the unanimity and loyalty of all parts of our far-flung Empire, and particularly of New Zealand, in supporting the Motherland in the hour of her need. We also rejoice in the valour and growing strength of the King's forces, and we join earnestly in prayer that God will defend the right, and cause the grinding militarism of Germany to cease from the earth. We regard the British Empire, with all its defects, as being, in practical righteousness, the largest instalment of the Kingdom of God that has yet arisen among men, and we earnestly pray that Almighty God will avert calamity from that dispensation of

righteousness and liberty which it has been the glory of our Empire to spread over the world.⁷⁸

Methodists were traditionally opposed to war, and looked forward to a Golden Age when there would be no more war. However, they were prepared to support Britain's participation in a war when Britain's cause was thought to be righteous. One such war was the Anglo-Boer War, which, with a few exceptions, claimed the enthusiastically patriotic support of Methodists. World War 1 engendered a

much deeper patriotism among Methodists once the war began. This was caused partly by the widespread belief in the imperialist ideology, which postulated an 'enemy' and, by implication, struggle for the British Empire's cause. Methodists shared in these beliefs. Early Methodist justifications for Britain's involvement in World War I soon tended to absolutise the reasons for the conflict, in blaming Germany for causing the war. But such tendencies were balanced by an awareness of Britain's transgressions. Rev S. J. Serpell caused disagreement in February 1915 by proposing that the war was a judgement on the Church's unfaithful interpretation of the Gospel. By this time, Germany was increasingly viewed as the sole culprit for the outbreak of the war, and was becoming identified with infernal powers.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER 2

- 1 Texts referred to: Isaiah 2:5; Micah 4:3.
- 2 'War and Peace' (editorial), NZM, 9/3/1889,
p.4.
- 3 Entered the ministry in 1879; Editor, NZMT,
May 1910-March 1913; became a Supernumerary in 1918
- 4 'The Argument of the Fang' (editorial note), NZMT,
28/12/1912, p.9. Summarised from the North-western
Christian Advocate (Chicago).
- 5 'The Protest against War' (editorial), NZM,
4/5/1889, p.4.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 The Peace Society's journal, the Herald of
Peace, admitted its concern in July 1912 that
pacifism was increasingly being repudiated by the
Society's members.
'Pacifists are not thorough-going enough.'
Too many members of the Peace Society
declared that they were not 'Peace-at-any-
price' men. It seemed likely that such
men were hardly 'Peace-at-any-price-at-
all'.
(Quoted in K. Robbins, The Abolition of War:
The 'Peace Movement' in Britain, 1914-1919,
Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1980, p.13.)
- 9 Ceadel, M., Pacifism in Britain 1914-1945: The
Defining of a Faith, Oxford, Clarendon Press,
1980, p.3.
- 10 As Ceadel uses the term; for his justification of
an italicised usage, see *ibid.*, pp.3-4.
- 11 'The Righteousness of War', O, 3/6/1905, pp.22-3.
Text: Revelation 19:11. It is perhaps significant
to note that this was the only statement on this
theme to be published in the official Methodist
organ in peacetime from 1871 to 1914. Moreover,
Scorgie was a Presbyterian minister. But since
no correspondence objecting to his opinions was
published, it is unlikely that there was much, if
any, strong objection to these opinions among
Methodists.
- 12 Ibid., p.22.
- 13 Ibid., p.23.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 'The War Cloud' (editorial note), A, 9/9/1899,
p.167.
- 16 And by one of Methodism's most emphatically
patriotic editors, Rev P.W. Fairclough.
('Trouble in the Transvaal' (editorial note),
A, 18/1/1896, p.373.)
- 17 Rev W.C. Oliver called it a wicked, miserable,
foolish burlesque. ('The War Cloud' (editorial
note), A, 21/10/1899, p.241)
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 MCNZ, 1900, p.72.

- 20 A, 24/3/1900, p.515.
- 21 For the following argument, see 'Why Are we at War?' (address), A, 17/2/1900, pp.451-2. Text: Isaiah 25:6-7.
- 22 Ibid., p.451.
- 23 Ibid., p.452.
- 24 Macleod, N.F.H., The Fighting Man: A Study of the Life and Times of T.E. Taylor, Christchurch, Dunbar and Summers, 1964, p.55.
- 25 Hudson, M.H., 'Who Provoked the War?' A, 12/5/1900, p.578.
- 26 'The War in South Africa', A, 14/4/1900, pp.541-2.
- 27 For the following argument, see 'God's Judgments' (sermon), A, 24/2/1900, pp.461-2. Text: Isaiah 26:9.
- 28 "Delta", 'A Criticism', A, 31/3/1900, p.518. See also R.B. Douglas (a Presbyterian minister in Johannesburg), 'Dr Watson on the Boer Soldiers' (correspondence), A, 3/3/1900, p.472; reprinted from British Weekly.
- 29 'The Crime of War' (editorial note), NZMT, 8/8/1914, p.9. Although this issue was released on August 8, the note had been written no later than August 3. Britain declared war as the issue was going to press, and so Williams managed to print a photograph of the King and Queen on the front page.
- 30 'The War' (editorial note), NZMT, 22/8/1914, p.8.
- 31 'A Stormy Outlook' (editorial), NZM, 26/2/1887, p.6.
- 32 Entered the ministry in 1867; President in 1887; Editor, A, April 1899-May 1901; Chairman of the District eighteen times; became a Supernumerary in 1909.
- 33 See above, pp.48-9
- 34 'Signs of War' (editorial), NZM, 2/5/1885, p.6.
- 35 The following argument is taken from "The New Zealand School Journal and the Imperial Ideology", NZJH, vol.7, no.1, April 1973, pp.12-27.
- 36 Entered the ministry in 1874; President in 1897; Editor, NZM, April 1883-May 1894; Editor, A, June 1894-April 1899; Chairman of the District fifteen times; died in 1917. In an imperialist age, Fairclough's imperialism was renowned among Methodists.
- 37 'The Mission of the Union Jack' (sermon), A, 21/8/1897, p.646. Text: Psalm 20:5.
- 38 Entered the ministry in 1871; President in 1892; Chairman of the District seventeen times; became a Supernumerary in 1915.
- 39 'After the Event: The Diamond Jubilee Celebrations, and What they Teach' (sermon), A, 17/7/1897, pp.600-1. Text: Deuteronomy 4:32.
- 40 "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." (Proverbs 14:34) This was a favourite text, often quoted and often

- expounded.
- 41 Ibid., p.601.
- 42 'The War in South Africa', p.541.
- 43 'The Bearing of Arms' (correspondence), NZMT,
15/7/1911, p.7.
- 44 '"Res Militaris"' (editorial note), NZMT,
5/9/1914, p.8.
- 45 The argument from silence is not quite proof;
Williams may simply have refused to print such
dissent. But this seems unlikely.
- 46 One of these letters was an argument for
voluntarist loyalism and against conscription;
but it was written by Rev Moses Ayrton, later
a well-known pacifist minister ('The Call of
the War', NZMT, 18/9/1915, p.14; for an
examination of Ayrton's opinions during the
war, see below, Ch.6, n.60, p.177). The other
was a pacifist rebuttal of A.S. Peake's anti-pacifist
arguments
('"Pacifists and the War"', NZMT, 8/7/1916,
p.12).
- 47 See above, p.53.
- 48 'For the Right' (editorial note), NZMT,
19/9/1914, p.8.
- 49 '"Res Militaris"', p.8.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 'For the Right', p.8.
- 52 'The Red Ruck of War' (editorial note), NZMT,
19/9/1914, p.8.
- 53 See above, p.49
- 54 'The Call to Prayer' (editorial), NZMT,
3/10/1914, p.1.
- 55 Ibid., p.2.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 Entered the ministry in 1884; President in 1914;
Chairman of the District six times; died in 1918.
- 59 NZMT, 6/3/1915, p.1.
- 60 Ibid., p.2.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 Ibid.
- 63 Text quoted: Proverbs 14:34.
- 64 Ibid.; emphasis original.
- 65 Text quoted: Luke 2:14.
- 66 Ibid.; emphasis original.
- 67 Ibid.; emphasis original.
- 68 Ibid., pp2-3; quotation from W.R. Inge,
The Church and the Age, London,
Longmans, 1912, p.ix.
- 69 Ibid., p.4.
- 70 Williams, W.J., 'The Retiring President'
(Conference notes), NZMT, 6/3/1915,
p.8.
- 71 See above, p.51.
- 72 Ibid.
- 73 W. Willmer to C.R.N. Mackie, CMP, 1/3/1915,
p.1. Mann's career: entered the Primitive
ministry in 1894; President of the Primitive
Methodist District Conference in 1911; died
in 1918. The meaning of Mann's "anti-

militarism" is best gauged from his retiring address to the 1912 Primitive Conference.

Personally, I am a peace advocate; I believe war to be barbarous and unnecessary, and that everything possible should be done to bring about International disarmament and arbitration.... But so long as there are armed nations, then I believe the British should have two keels to one of any other nation, and her army must be fit.

(NZPM, 1/2/1912, p.39) It was his strong opposition to compulsory military training which earned him a reputation as an anti-militarist.

74 See below, Ch.6, n.60, p.177.

75 "Vesta", 'Prayers for the Germans', NZMT, 20/2/1915, p.6.

76 See above, pp.59-60

77 MCNZ, 1919, p.16.

78 MCNZ, 1915, p.117. The mover was Paul Fairclough, and the resolution repeated nearly verbatim that of the North Canterbury District Synod in November 1914, again as moved by Fairclough (Minutes, North Canterbury District Synod, 1914, p.39).

CHAPTER III

THE DIABOLISATION OF GERMANY

The previous chapter examined how Methodists relied on traditional ideas concerning war and European politics to find an early explanation and justification for Britain's involvement in World War I. However, even these somewhat measured expressions of support showed some tendency to absolutise the terms of the conflict. The nature of modern war soon showed Methodists that traditional theories were unable to explain coherently the scale of the evil facing them. There was a need to find a more satisfactory ideological basis for pursuing the war. Thus Methodists began to picture a "nation gone mad", against which it was a Christian's clear duty to fight. Once this argument was proposed, the major difficulty was to keep Methodist attitudes to the war and the enemy within the boundaries of evangelical theology. This chapter will examine the process by which the enemy, Germany, was subjected to a vilification so intense that it became equated with demonic forces.

1. German Militarism

The idea of "Prussian Militarism"¹ was not new; it was in existence at least just before World War I, and had been one of the reasons given for opposing compulsory military training in the pre-war debate on the provisions of the Defence Act of 1909.² But the early stages of the war gave Methodists the opportunity to examine in detail the "effects" of German militarism. Marrin, in his study of British Anglican attitudes, details the alleged German "atrocities" which so inflamed British opinion against Germany. The

reports of these atrocities began to deflect evangelical opinion from considering British transgressions in favour of an exclusive concentration of national sin and evil intent on Germany. The war was perceived as a "premeditated crime" engineered and fought by incarnate demonic agents, and the performance of the German army in carrying out the Schlieffen Plan in France in August 1914 was held to show that "...for forty years the Kaiser's government had been plotting and preparing, arming and working, for the conquest of Europe, perhaps of the world."³

Such views were developed at a very early stage in the war. As Marrin shows, many British clergymen defended the Germans in the first few weeks of the war;⁴ but this attitude was soon dropped in reaction to a campaign of German "atrocities" which began in late August 1914. The change in attitude was deepened by the protraction of the war, as a need arose to explain the actions of a seemingly malevolent opponent in a way that would strengthen morale for a long conflict.

An examination of the secular press would reveal the impact of early German atrocities on the thinking of New Zealanders; but there seems to have been considerable outrage, and probably the vast majority of Methodists shared in this outrage. The outcry was enough to call forth W.J. Williams' observation:

It is a curious comment on the ethics of war, that while a regard for the sacredness of human life is reduced to a minimum, such outrages as the wanton destruction of cathedrals, art galleries and universities are denounced as the very acme of savagery.⁵

Considering that events like the burning of the library at the University of Louvain provoked tremendous indignation,

this detached irony is surprising, and can be explained as the result of an awareness of British imperfections; but it soon disappeared. Reports of the operation of the German war machine made it very clear that the "fact" of German militarism had not previously been taken seriously enough before. Thus New Zealand Methodists felt a need to explain German wickedness intellectually, as did British Anglicans.

The main factor leading to the radicalisation of Methodist attitudes to the conflict was Germany's reportedly systematic perpetration of atrocities.

The scrap of paper incident is immortalised to the glory of Britain and the eternal shame of Germany. The crime for the commencement and continuance of war is Germany's, not ours. The crime of breaking covenants, sacking buildings sacred by many memories belongs to Germany. The crime of outraging women and girls with a callousness, a brazenness unknown in modern times belongs to Germany. The crime of attacking defenceless towns and ships and murdering undefended women and helpless children belongs to Germany. In evidence of this we point to Belgium, to Hartlepool, to Scarborough, to the Lusitania, to the Arabic, to the Persia, and to a thousand other events which tell of insincerity, subtilty [sic], tyranny, greed of power, disregard for others' rights, unholy claim that might is right that leads to rapine and murder. ...war of this character in this spirit on a scale the world has never before seen has been forced upon our Empire and upon the world.⁶

These atrocities were mentioned by Methodists throughout the war, though usually not specifically or in detail. Nevertheless, they were significant. Williams' ironical attitude was quickly superseded as it became accepted that these atrocities were not isolated mistakes, but part of a systematic (and seemingly gratuitous) attempt to destroy things held to be integral to civilisation. So it was necessary to explain what was causing this destruction. The religious man did not need to report the atrocities; they were the "facts" provided by the secular press. Rather he was

trying to explain the atrocities as the result of a certain mentality.

The cause of the atrocities was held to be "German militarism". The term existed before the war, but it acquired new significance with the perpetration of the atrocities. German militarism became a kind of philosophy in itself, characterised by '...that hateful lust for power [which] seeks to dominate the world and shape civilisation to its infernal pattern....'⁸ Germany gloried in and lusted after war. Germans considered that

"War itself is a good thing. God will see to it that war always occurs. The efforts directed towards the abolition of war must not only be termed foolish, but absolutely immoral." ⁹

Germans believed that might was right and accepted the Bismarckian gospel of "blood and iron"¹⁰. Rev Harry Ranston,¹¹ comparing the German conquest of Belgium to the overwhelming of the island of Melos by Athens in 416 B.C., claimed that Athens

...had drunk of the same spirit as Prussia. She had accepted as frankly and as shamelessly as the Kaiser the so-called law of nature that the stronger should rule the weaker, that they must hold their possessions who can. They should take who have the power to take.¹²

War gave Germany the chance to conquer the world, thus securing a universal despotism. So the Allies' task was very clear:

...to utterly crush a barbarous militarism which menaces the world's civilisation....¹³

...this world will not be worth living in for anybody until that masterpiece of consummate devilry represented by German Militarism is so smitten to earth that it can never rise again....¹⁴

In a very short period Williams had moved far in spirit from his declarations of the first two months of the war, and this

passionate denunciation created some theological puzzles later.

The Kaiser, Methodists were told, had instructed his soldiers 'to fight like Huns with "frightfulness"¹⁵'. This was carried out, the soldiers indulging in cruelty, outrage, and devilshness.

Every consideration for morality, and even humanity, on [Germany's] side of the war seems to have gone by the board. The brutal dictum of Bernhardi that nothing must be allowed to stand in the way of reaching victory by the most direct route is being carried out to the letter. A pledged word is "only a scrap of paper"; all the laws and usages of international warfare are flung to the winds in the desperateness of the endeavour to frighten and cripple the enemy. All the resources of science are drawn upon for the devilish enginery [sic] of war, in utter regardlessness [sic] of claims that even an infuriated savage would respect.¹⁶

In short, Methodists believed that 'The policy of "frightfulness" that Germany has deliberately chosen is the most diabolical that was ever conceived.'¹⁷

As it emerged, this accusation of German diabolism was sustained by the apparent efficiency of the German war machine. If the German forces' atrocities (which included those committed by submarines) reflected something diabolically wrong in German society, the imposingly smooth operation of the Schlieffen Plan in France in August 1914 suggested an even more insidiously infernal German readiness to wage war. This desire to attribute the worst of motives to Germany sprang from two factors. Firstly, the outbreak of the war had been an enormous shock to Britons. They had not faced a general, or even a limited, European war for a century. 'The war of 1915 stands for a hideous anachronism.... The German Huns sprang a surprise upon a world that was settling down to regard war as a back number.'¹⁸

Secondly, this war was the first modern total war that Britons had faced, and its scale and features were both new and horrifying. The British Presbyterian politician, Viscount Bryce summed up Methodist confusion over this very well. He noted that '...every nation has been horrified by the unprecedented suddenness and magnitude of this war',¹⁹ and showed the material size of the war. He then continued:

But regarded on the moral side, this war is an event not less unprecedented and even more terrifying. A frightful chasm seems to have suddenly opened at our feet. All the work that had been done since the Middle Ages to regulate the conduct of war and introduce some mitigations of its essential inhumanity seems to have been thrown away, for in no war within the last few centuries have innocent non-combatants suffered so severely. All the efforts made to secure the arbitration of international disputes, to provide safeguards for peace, to promote goodwill between the peoples, have been in a moment lost, forgotten, trodden under foot. We seem to have been suddenly thrown back into the ages of savagery, when might was right. The Government of a great and highly educated nation, to whose poets and philosophers we have owed an immeasurable debt, has not only openly avowed, but actually put in practice doctrines which strike at the roots of all law and of civil society itself, doctrines which trample on justice and extinguish pity.²⁰

This confusion was caused by a lack of understanding of the nature of "total war". Marrin notes that "the myth of German premeditation", and the resultant willingness to attribute devilish motives and aims to Germany, was caused partly by "...a misconception about the sequence of events leading up to modern wars."²¹ Logistical planning by governments long in advance is necessary, but wars cannot be engineered for a precise date. Essentially, as Bryce realised, the traditional doctrine of the just war was an inadequate explanation of this new phenomenon, and a more realistic explanation of the facts was required. What Bryce and others did not realise was that the "facts" and their

interpretations were disputable.

2. Rationalistic Diabolism

Germany's apparent readiness for a great war, and the manner in which they conducted it once it came, suggested that the evil which Methodists believed themselves to be facing was a cause of the war, not a result. Thus not even the postulation of the philosophy of German militarism seemed to be able to explain the enormous evil which was confronting them. Methodists felt that Germany could only have acted as it did if German society overall had been sufficiently debased to want to wage war; and since war was the very opposite of Christian teaching and practice, it was reasonable to expect to find the true cause of Germany's evil motives, actions, and intent in the realm of ideas. If there was any evidence that Germany was being led by anti-Christian philosophies, it would lend strong sanction to a Christian's fight on the Allied side.

...the minister of religion or the devout layman is capable, given the right set of circumstances, of radicalizing a conflict to a degree impossible for the secular-minded. Besides idealizing an issue, his training and general outlook predispose him to "theologize", to cast it in terms of absolute, divinely sanctioned moral imperatives; he may even go so far as to conclude that one side is in league with Antichrist, the other fighting in company with God and the Angelic Host.²²

Marrin goes on to show how British Anglicans developed an explanation of the war which was satisfactory for their purposes. Most Britons knew little of Germany before the war. In the early months of the war, the intellectual vilification of Germany developed in three areas. The German Emperor Wilhelm II was denounced most vehemently as "the living embodiment of [an] autocratic system",²³ where the

State had total control over the individual, denying him the God-given freedom to choose between good and evil. The ideas of three men - Nietzsche, Treitschke, and Bernhardi - were seized on, distorted, and presented "...as illustrations of the perversion and brutalization of the German intellect²⁴." Their ideas were held to have taken over German intellectual life and government policy. Finally, organised Christianity had failed in Germany, both in its subservience to the State, and in failing to counter the rationalism inspired by its own historical criticism and liberal theology. This section will combine the first two areas and examine the allegedly diabolical nature of German intellectualism. The next section will examine German Christianity's alleged failure to counter this.

Some of the ideas attributed to German militarism were examined briefly in the previous section. In fact, it was thought to be more of a religion than a philosophy. Furthermore, it was a religion that had developed from a direct and longstanding rejection of Christianity by Germany.

Was Christ King in Germany? The leading savants of Germany had been doing their best for fifty years to explain away His cross and resurrection. The German had drunk in from his very cradle the gospel of blood and iron, which was in deadly antagonism to the message of Christ, and had been educated for years with the idea that might is right.²⁵

Even before the war, this was recognised, and the variety of teaching which had emerged to replace Christianity was noted with some disquiet.

Every kind of intellectual sophistry seems to flourish on German soil. [....] The black teaching of Nietzsche, the mysticism of Johannes Muller, the agnosticism of a Buddhist faith - all have their followers, and Christian Science churches, theosophical lodges, and spiritualistic table-turning jostle one another for the patronage of the educated.

Widest of all in its popular appeal is the teaching of Haeckel, who is read by the hundreds of thousands. [He] is the guiding spirit of the attack upon Christianity, and his recently organised Association of Freethinkers is a menacing federation of all the anti-Christian forces of the Fatherland.²⁶

This pre-war reference to Nietzsche is intriguing, for he was one of the three "lying prophets" whose works were roundly condemned soon after the war started. Despite this reference, it is unlikely that any Methodist knew anything much about Nietzsche, or even Germany overall, before the war started.²⁷ British Anglican clergymen, with their much higher educational standard, knew very little;²⁸ New Zealand Methodists can hardly have been better informed. Thus the information supplied for Rev James T. Pinfold's article on Nietzsche in January 1915²⁹ almost certainly came from the common source.

Nietzsche vehemently rejected conventional standards of morality as a decline from the unsocial purity of a primitive state of living.

"I regard the bad conscience as the serious illness which man was bound to contract under the stress of the most radical change which he has ever experienced - that change when he finally found himself imprisoned within the pale of society and of peace."³⁰

Morality was simply a matter of taste; good and evil were the same thing. "Morality itself is a form of immorality."³¹ Considering these views, Nietzsche's uncompromising hatred of and attack on Christianity and Christian morals was not surprising. Christianity was one moral system which prevented the individual man from being himself by acting as he wished. 'He declared them to be, like all other morals, merely an expedient for increasing the power of him that taught them.'³²

The only way to overcome the 'nihilism, decadence,

degeneration and death' of Christian values was for people to
'"...give themselves a will of their own, and renounce all
submission."³³ Nietzsche postulated the doctrine of the
Superman, who stood for the glorification of cruelty and
force. The assertion of one's self, which was the only good,
necessarily meant showing

...a complete disregard and brutal contempt for the
rights of others, especially the weak and helpless.
"Exploitation ...does not belong to a decayed,
imperfect or primitive society; it belongs to the
essence of living things as organic function." ³⁴

Thus war was good, and could be expected to facilitate the
emergence of the Superman, which would result in the highest
development of man, something which altruism could never do,
because it allowed weakness to continue. "War and courage
have accomplished greater things than love for one's fellow-
men."³⁵

In this context, Nietzsche's actual teaching is not
important; the significant factor is what Methodists thought
he taught. Pinfold summarised his thought thus:

Militarism is the logical outcome of Nietzsche's
sentiments. To him the teaching of Jesus Christ is
pure weakness. He was a hater of democracy, to whom
the morality current amongst men to-day must be
decisively set aside. ³⁶

In other words, Nietzsche espoused everything that early
twentieth century New Zealand Methodists anathematised, and
vice versa. It was easy for Methodists to call his teaching
demonic; indeed, Pinfold asserted that Nietzsche had
eventually chosen the role of Antichrist for himself, thus
wrecking his and his nation's life.

Teaching such as this could have but one result. One
can understand how people, imbued with such doctrine,
would show scant respect to a "scrap of paper,"
whatever might be written upon it, and whatever names
it might contain, when they regarded themselves as

masters of the situation, and able to enforce their commands by Bismarckian "blood and iron."³⁷

The task was to prove that Germany had adopted wholeheartedly the teaching of a near-lunatic, as Pinfold himself recognised.

One of the great problems for the future psychologist to solve will be how the intellectual life of Germany could have been captivated so much, and the German nation influenced so greatly by a pronounced maniac as to blindly follow his teaching, to its own undoing and ultimate ruin.³⁸

Neither Treitschke nor Bernhardi were analysed in the Methodist Times as Nietzsche had been. The significance of this can be overestimated; after all, their teaching was available through other means. If it is at all significant that only Nietzsche's teaching was examined, it is probably because Nietzsche's teaching was seen as the philosophical root of the diabolism in Germany which caused the war and its atrocities. If the Methodist Times is any guide, there was little interest in Treitschke's teaching; none of his ideas were ever mentioned.

Bernhardi's ideas received an occasional notice, but these can be placed within the framework of "German militarism". The dictum that '...nothing must be allowed to stand in the way of reaching victory by the most direct route...' ³⁹ summed up perfectly a society which had so glorified war that it could disregard international treaties and commit all kinds of atrocities. Ultimately, this was held to be the proof of the wide influence of Nietzsche's teaching. It was wishful thinking rather than proof; Methodists held it to be true because they wanted and needed it to be true. At least it offered an explanation of the undoubted "fact" of the atrocities, and the mentality needed

in a nation in order to perpetrate them. Germany had put Nietzschean philosophy and the militarism which developed from it into action; German militarism had become a religion.

The "religion" of "German militarism" was a combination of varied evils in German intellectual and social life. It was a materialistic religion.

Germany has pushed God out of her national life. [....] Materialism has been the God she has worshipped, and this has led her to throw aside Christian principles so that she might no longer be handicapped in using methods which have not only been unchristian but a disgrace to civilisation.⁴⁰

Germany 'had accepted the religion of matter, force and success'.⁴¹ Germany's gospel was '"Brute force and raw might"'.⁴² Germany had become wholly devoted to this religion, a religion which glorified war: 'For half a century war has been the industry, the philosophy, yea, even the religion of Germany....'⁴³ It was not enough merely to hold that '...military necessity excused any crime, and victory atoned for any infamy....'⁴⁴ The sword was a 'divine instrument of regeneration.'⁴⁵ A certain Herr Fugmann believed that

...the war is the Creator's plan for purifying the German nation so that it may be worthy of its divine destiny as the ruler of the world. [J.T. Pinfold commented:] It is this notion of a world-wide sovereignty that has filled the mind's eye of the Teuton to such an extent that he believes himself the superman whose "Will to Power" changes our conceptions of morality...⁴⁶

Germany's (self-)righteous ambition was the conquest and domination of the world according to the pattern of autocratic despotism; thus war was 'the condition of true racial development'.⁴⁷ Germany called this "Kultur"; Methodists simply sneered at it. Germany had tried to spread Kultur by waging war:

Germany regarded the world as suffering from... the disease of a non-German mind. In their Prussianised conceit the Kaiser and his myrmidons thought that the greatest boon they could confer on the world was to give it a German mind, and forthwith endeavoured to administer their "Kultur" physic by military aggression. ⁴⁸

They failed disastrously:

Germany's boasted "Kultur" has scattered desolation everywhere. Belgium forms a vivid picture of the horrible outrage war really is when waged by a lawless foe without principles. ⁴⁹

The English Methodist Recorder declared that 'Germany has unveiled herself [as a] 'sea' of iniquity.⁵⁰

In all this, what had gone wrong for Germany? Methodist writers asserted that three characteristics had come to dominate Germany: madness, lust, and devilishness. In this, Germany seemed to reflect so well the insanity that conquered Nietzsche that there had to be a connection. In any case, these characteristics were described in rather lurid language.

Prussianised Germany has repeated on an international scale the fiction tragedy of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. Throughout the nineteenth century Germany trifled with a mixture of materialism and pagan religion, and successive doses of this mixture has left Germany brutal, barbaric, vile. Periods of decency have alternated with outbreaks of villainy, until, at last, in a fit of lustful violence, Germany has trampled over little Belgium... and gone on, leaving Serbia, too, a bruised and bleeding mass upon the road of Europe. That is war as we have had it thrust upon us - an exhibition of criminality, the incarnation of outlawry among organised human enterprises.⁵¹

W.J. Williams had emphatically departed from his early moderation by the end of the war, describing Germany as 'The wild beast of Europe that licks its greedy lips, with a tongue coated thick with the blood of millions, and grunts with satisfaction in doing it....'⁵² Thus

The triumph of the Germany whose heart has been laid bare in the fierce glare of this war would mean a set-

back of the world to its darkest ages and the loss of all that Christian civilisation stands for.⁵³

This mad lustfulness, which made the possibility of a German victory so alarming for civilisation, witnessed to the devilishness that had appeared and taken over in Germany. Rev John D. Thompson, a leading British Primitive minister, referring to the report that the German troops had entered Antwerp singing Luther's great Reformation hymn, 'Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott', asserted with outraged indignation: 'It is not the hymn of enthroned wrong.... It is a challenge to rampant diabolism, not the glorification of that which the German Army would fain make it.'⁵⁴ He claimed that 'These "devils" appear to have taken German shape to-day.' Dr F.B. Meyer, a leading Baptist minister, agreed:

"I am increasingly convinced...that Britain and her Allies are fighting not only against flesh and blood, but against the wicked spirits that rule the darkness of this world. Nothing else can account for the extraordinary passion and inhumanity which, like a paroxysm, seems to possess the German nation. Rev xii,12⁵⁵ is being literally fulfilled before our eyes"

This had become possible because Germany had ignored God's providential government of the world, with dire consequences.

...the question of ultimate profit or loss in connection with this war will be determined by moral, rather than by material, considerations. On this reckoning ...this war can never be to Germany anything else than an irreparable, an irretrievable loss. [....] If we assume that instead of being defeated, Germany will win and gather in the spoils of all the nations with which she is now at war, even then the balance will be infinitely against her. The scale of judgment for the nation, as for the individual, was announced by Christ when He said, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" The tragic thing about Germany is...that it has lost its soul! [....] No gold can cover the stain of Germany's criminality; no territory acquired⁵⁶ can outweigh the terrible burden of a lost soul.

Germany's longstanding rejection of Christianity had led to the development of a directly anti-Christian philosophy. From this, a militaristic religion had developed which was based on a lustful desire for world conquest. Germany so surrendered to this desire that it lost its soul and became a victim of diabolical possession, which drove it to madness and caused it to wage war in complete disregard and contempt for all morality and humanity. It would not have been necessary to fight

If Germany had not listened to the teaching of Bernhardt; if the Kaiser had not lost his reason and his soul; if Christ instead of Krupps had been the trust of a delirious nation. ⁵⁷

3. The Failure of German Christianity

The Christian Church, Methodists assumed, would be the one institution which would oppose the general abandonment of and reaction against Christianity in German life. But the German Church had followed the prevailing intellectual wind in Germany too, and so it rendered itself incapable of providing an alternative to the growing adoption of German militarism as a philosophy and religion.

A little information about German Christianity had been published not long before the war. Methodists saw the picture as disquieting. Germany fostered the rationalism which had produced the very popular teaching of the materialist, Haeckel.⁵⁸ There was a large group of Social Democrats, most of whom were atheists; one of their fundamental principles was the reduction of religion to the private sphere, eliminating any social or institutional form or function.⁵⁹ And there were those in the Evangelical State Church who espoused a liberal theology; they were thought to

pose the greatest threat to evangelical orthodoxy.

The present trend of German theological thought is towards a rationalistic liberalism. An orthodox theological professor is a rare quantity in a German University. The chief mission of the liberal theology seems to be to tear down. By its negative and destructive method it tears the Bible to pieces, it has no place in its system for the miracles of the Gospels, denies any real divinity to Jesus Christ, sets aside atonement, and generally repudiates almost all the cardinal truths that have been sacred to evangelical Christianity. Such a theology is paralysing the spiritual life of the German church. So little of gospel is left that religion becomes empty and barren.⁶⁰

This perceived threat was feared mainly because of the impact of German higher criticism on the teachings of the bible.

The war afforded some opportunity to attack German rationalistic liberalism and to seek to "re-establish" the Bible and evangelical orthodoxy. As Marrin indicates, the publication of the 'Appeal to Evangelical Christians Abroad', made by leading members of the German religious and academic communities, roused British Christians to fury and refutation.⁶¹ Rev Samuel Chadwick, a leading British Wesleyan minister, pointed out that if these critics could be so manifestly wrong on such clear matters of fact, they were discredited also in the conclusions based on their "critical" scholarship:

Even men like Harnack, Deissmann and Loofs have given their endorsement to documents that are flagrantly at variance with facts and indefensible in logic. It is said in their defence that they know no better. Then they ought to. There are State documents that can be had for a few coppers, and if they can ignore evidence and pervert facts that are under their very noses, what confidence can be placed in their judgment on things remote and divine?⁶²

Chadwick quoted an examination by a certain Rev W.H.G. Thomas in Bibliotheca Sacra of the connection between the war and

the view of the Bible which had prevailed for so long in Germany. The philosophy of Pan-Germanism had Germanised Christianity; and to achieve this, it had had to rationalise the Bible, with a disastrous influence on the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith.

It has eliminated the supernatural, denied the Deity of our Lord, emptied the Cross of all-atoning virtue, repudiated the Resurrection, and turned Christian experience into a natural evolution of spiritual consciousness.⁶³

This amounted to a biblical revolution, claimed a certain Rev W.H. Hincks⁶⁴ from Toronto. German scholarship had allegedly tended to concentrate more on adding something new to the sum of human knowledge than on mastering old theories and facts. This 'sensationalist investigation' so detracted from the stability of German theological interpretation that Christians were faced with a biblical revolution which replaced 'sane and reverent constructive criticism' with the 'dissolving views' of liberal theologians. The significance of this lay in its social impact.

"In order to Prussianise Germany, ...men had first to rationalise the Bible. The old order in Germany would never have yielded to the new state of things had the old Bible held its place in German life. And the reason the Bible lost its place lies in the Biblical revolution wrought by professional sensationalists. A revolutionised Bible has produced a revolution in Germany's social life, in her moral ideals, and in her national aspirations."⁶⁵

J. Cocker summed up this article with comments reflecting Methodist views on the subject precisely.

German scholarship in relation to the Word of God has in some circles been regarded as the very last word on the subject, and too blindly have many of our own preachers and teachers become echoing boards for the German rationalists. Now we are witnessing the inevitable outcome of a Bible edited by human hands and trimmed to suit the tastes of the "scholars." The present state of Germany is an awful example to the world of what happens to the nation that creates its own God and its own Bible.⁶⁶

This attack on German-inspired theology had little to do with German theology itself. Vague accusations of the abandonment of traditional Christian doctrine were hurled at German theologians; but little or no evidence was produced to support the accusers' contentions. Moreover, liberal theology was too deeply rooted in the life of the Methodist Church to be eradicated at all, let alone by accusations deriving from a combination of theological suspicion and nationalistic prejudice. In fact, the influence of liberal theology in New Zealand Methodism seems to have been stronger after World War I than before it. This indicates that theological questions too important to be brushed aside easily were being raised. Furthermore, the historicist assumptions that lay behind liberal theology had prevailed throughout Western Europe in the nineteenth century. Had the liberal theology that allegedly came from Germany been unable to answer questions important to British Christians who shared these historicist assumptions, it would not have gained any foothold. The only way to undermine liberal theology was to undermine the underlying historicism that was firmly part of nineteenth century British liberalism; and once that was done, there were still awkward biblical problems awaiting the explanation of an evangelical who believed in something like the verbal inerrancy of the Bible.⁶⁷

The value of these accusations lay more in facing the immediate wartime problem of explaining Germany's actions. This was one more proof that Germany had abandoned the obedience to Christian standards and values which, Methodists believed, made a nation strong. It was not simply a matter of the external rejection of Christian ethics, but of the

underlying abandonment of the Christian revelation. But at the same time, Germany's "apostasy", it was believed, provided a warning to Methodists of what would happen to their country should they do the same.

If we permit the microbe of doubt and suspicion and criticism to enter our schools and our universities, the effect will be seen in the decadence of our spiritual life, and when that goes national disaster will not be far off. We are not pessimists by any means, but we are anxious that the sad example of Germany should be taken seriously to heart, and we agree with Sir Ernest Tritton when he calls for the thorough and complete extirpation of German theology from our midst.⁶⁸

However, since the lines of cleavage over biblical interpretation did not depend on the alleged impact of liberal theological rationalism on the nation that promoted it, such contentions soon faded from public discussion, and probably from private conviction too. These views only underlined the inability of Methodists to comprehend realistically the reasons for war and the issues at stake in this war.

New Zealand Methodists were soon faced with a war that seemed to exhibit evil on an unprecedented scale. Searching for explanations for reports of German atrocities, they developed a theory that Germany had abandoned Christianity and replaced it with the anti-Christian philosophy of German militarism. The writings of Nietzsche, which had provided the underpinning for this philosophy, had eventually led the German people to adopt as a religion a demonic philosophy. This had driven Germany mad with lust for conquest of the world. German Christianity failed to stop this slide into diabolical madness, by surrendering evangelical orthodoxy for historical criticism and liberal theology. Thus Germany, in

its madness, represented the forces of evil on earth.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER 3

- 1 "Prussian" and "German" were used interchangeably of this "militarism"; "German" will be followed from here, but "Prussian" acknowledged the role of the Prussian army in nineteenth century European history, and also the system of training which had created it.
- 2 Plumridge, E.W., 'Labour in Christchurch: Community and Consciousness, 1914-1919', Christchurch, University of Canterbury, 1979 (unpublished M.A. thesis), pp.82-3.
- 3 Marrin, p.91. For the preceding argument, see *ibid.*, pp.89-91.
- 4 *Ibid.*, pp.87-8
- 5 'The Call to Prayer' (editorial), NZMT, 3/10/1914, p.1.
- 6 Dawson, J., Retiring Presidential Address (1916 Conference), NZMT, 4/3/1916, p.5.
- 7 Only one lengthy report of an atrocity appeared in the Methodist Times during the war - the Turkish massacre of the Armenians in April 1915. The crime allegedly happened only because the Germans consented (Cocker, J., 'The Murder of the Armenians' (leader), 15/4/1916, pp.8-9).
- 8 Guttery, A.T., 'The Message of the Church to Britain' (address), NZMT, 18/9/1915, p.3.
- 9 Quoted in W. Ready, 'Religion and the War' (paper), NZMT, 10/6/1916, p.9. The writer has been unable to trace the source of Ready's quotation.
- 10 Macnutt, F.B. (a British Anglican Preacher), 'How War Affects Christian Faith' (sermon extract), NZMT, 13/11/1915, p.3.
- 11 Entered the Primitive ministry in 1901; President in 1927; Theological Tutor, 1920-30; Principal, Trinity Theological College, 1931-40; became a Supernumerary in 1941.
- 12 'An Action Sermon of Long Ago', NZMT, 28/9/1918, p.9.
- 13 Dukes, J., 'Life's Higher Value' (sermon), NZMT, 24/11/1917, p.9. Text: Acts 20:24.
- 14 'The Tightening Grip of War' (editorial note), NZMT, 6/2/1915, p.8.
- 15 'Corsica v Galilee', NZMT, 29/5/1915, p.2.
- 16 'The Ethics of War' (editorial note), NZMT, 29/5/1915, p.1.
- 17 'Christmas and War' (editorial), NZMT, 23/12/1916, p.8.
- 18 'Waterloo and After' (editorial note), NZMT, 26/6/1915, p.1.
- 19 'The War and Christianity: The Immediate Duty of Christian Men', NZMT, 22/1/1916, p.3. Reprinted from the Quiver.
- 20 *Ibid.* cf. Rev A.T. Guttery's exposition of the same problem, culminating in his assertion that a righteousness for the whole

world to practise was being threatened at its roots.

The worst havoc of war is moral rather than material. The most sacred sanctions have been broken. Not only have treaties been torn to shreds, but the finest instincts of humanity have been treated with contempt. Faith has been staggered by the temporary victories of evil. The foundations of a world-righteousness have been shaken.

('Get Out or Get Under', NZMT, 26/10/1918, p.7.)

21 Marrin, p.90.

22 Ibid., p.98 The rest of the chapter will examine Methodist arguments; cf. those developed by British Anglicans (ibid., pp.94-118).

23 Ibid., p.94.

24 Ibid., p.98.

25 Macnutt, p.3.

26 'Religious State of Germany' (editorial note), NZPM, 2/12/1912, pp.276-7. Reprinted from Sunday at Home.

27 See Marrin, pp.101-2, on how Nietzsche, Treitschke and Bernhardi came to be used as examples of German intellectual wickedness.

28 Ibid., pp.99-101.

29 Entered the ministry in 1880; became a Supernumerary in 1921. For the following argument, see 'Nietzsche', NZMT, 9/1/1915, pp.9-10.

30 Ibid., p.9. Quoted from F. Nietzsche, Genealogy of Morals.

31 Ibid., no source of the quotation given.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid., no source of the quotation given.

34 Ibid., p.10, source uncertain.

35 Ready, p.9; quoted from Thus Spake Zarathustra.

36 Pinfold, p.9.

37 Ibid., p.10.

38 Ibid.

39 See above, p.75

40 Cocker, J., '"Keep God Out of it!'" NZMT, 23/12/1916, p.5.

41 Guttery, A.T., 'The Victory of the Spirit', NZMT, 23/12/1916, p.5.

42 Wilson, J. (correspondence), NZMT, 20/1/1917, p.13. Reprinted from the Sydney Methodist.

43 Pinfold, J.T., 'Benefits of War', NZMT, 24/6/1916, p.4.

44 Guttery, A.T., 'The German Temper', NZMT, 6/1/1917, p.12.

45 Ibid. Note that the 'god' meant ~~was~~ the pagan Teutonic god and/or the god of materialism.

46 'Benefits of War', p.4.

47 'The German Temper', p.12.

48 Peat, H.T. 'How to End War' (sermon), NZMT, 2/2/1918, p.9. Text: Isaiah 2:4.

- 49 Ready, p.9.
- 50 'The British Churches and the War', NZMT, 4/9/1915, p.3.
- 51 Chappell, A.B., 'The Bright Side of the War' (sermon), NZMT, 5/8/1916, p.9. Text: Romans 8:28. Chappell's career: Entered the ministry in 1896; Organising Secretary, Connexional Sunday School and Young People's Board, 1908-9; died in 1942.
- 52 '"Hold Fast!"' (editorial), NZMT, 17/8/1918, p.8.
- 53 'The New Music of Victory' (editorial), NZMT, 12/10/1918, p.8.
- 54 'Luther's Great Battle Hymn', NZMT, 10/7/1915, p.9.
- 55 As reported from an article appearing in the Wanganui Herald and the Wanganui Chronicle. "G.J.B.", 'A Call of Prayer for the War' (correspondence), NZMT, 18/9/1915, p.14. Revelation 12:12: "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of sea, for the Devil is come down upon you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."
- 56 'Will the War Be Worth its Cost?' (editorial), NZMT, 10/7/1915, p.8. Text quoted: Mark 8:36.
- 57 Horton. S. (a British Primitive minister), 'The March of 20,000 Men', NZMT, 26/6/1915, p.3.
- 58 'Religious State of Germany', pp.276-7.
- 59 Havighurst, C.R. (denominational allegiance unknown), 'Religious Conditions in Germany', NZPM, 1/12/1911, p.292.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Marrin, pp.109-10
- 62 'Germany's Attitude to the Bible', NZMT, 29/5/1915, p.9. Reprinted from Joyful News.
- 63 Ibid.
- 64 For the following argument, see 'A "Germanised" Bible and its results: A Warning to us', NZMT, 13/11/1915, p.3.
- 65 Ibid.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 For the influence of historicist assumptions on biblical interpretation, see W.B. Glover, Evangelical Nonconformists and Higher Criticism in the Nineteenth Century, London, Independent Press, 1954, especially chs. 1,3.
- 68 'German Theology', NZMT, 5/8/1916, p.5. Reprinted from Life of Faith. Tritton's identity is unknown to the writer.

CHAPTER IV

THE WAR OF IDEALS

The intellectual absolutisation of World War I was caused not by the inability of traditional theories to explain the scale of the contest, but by their inability to explain horrors whose magnitude had never previously been experienced in such a contest. Methodists, in company with virtually all citizens, vilified Germany because the evidence - at least as presented to them, and as they chose to interpret it - showed a nation bent as never before on the destruction of all that Western European civilisation represented. Thus to them Britain and its Allies were necessarily fighting to protect this civilisation and advance the cause of humanity. This chapter will examine the way in which old theories and new "facts" were combined in order to exalt the justice of Britain's cause.

1. "Civilisation": Outraged or Bankrupt?

Such was the impact of World War I on the consciousness of Methodists that a tendency to view the war in terms of fundamental ideals very soon emerged. All confidence that humanity was progressing upwards to the Golden Age was shaken: '...it seems as if a staggering blow were struck at the fondly cherished hope that we were fast approaching the period when nations would learn war no more.'¹ Before the war broke out, W.J. Williams had expressed his great indignation that such a large war could be caused by such a trivial dispute:

It almost looks as if there were not common-sense enough in all the Chancelleries of Europe to insist on localising the original dispute, and demanding that such a crime against humanity as the threatened

war must not and should not be permitted.²

According to this viewpoint, Western European civilisation had failed to prevent the war's outbreak because it was bankrupt.

Once the war began, Methodists at once proved loyalist, following the British Nonconformist pattern. Stephen Koss shows that the abrupt change of stance caused much anguish to some Nonconformist leaders as their pre-war hopes were shattered.³ It is important to note that New Zealand Methodism did not generally share the political radicalism which characterised sections of British Nonconformity. Nevertheless, while the liberalism of New Zealand Methodists is best characterised as "imperialist", they share sufficiently in the liberal optimism regarding future world history to be shocked by the war.

Wartime Methodist literature gives signs of this shock. W.J. Williams summarised the problem well:

The world to-day is certainly not a lovely spectacle for angels to look at; it is the kind of world... that could be viewed with delight only by devils. It seems to be the devil's triumph that is recorded in the slaughters, outrages, destructions, savageries, heartbreaks, cruelties and wickednesses of the present war. Hell, apparently, has broken loose, and pandemonium reigns in regions that had professedly been brought within the range of Christian civilisation.⁴

The British Presbyterian politician, Viscount Bryce referred to the 'frightful [moral] chasm' which the war had created,⁵ and replied to those who claimed that the war was demonstrating Christianity's bankruptcy:

It would be more true to say that we see a bankruptcy of civilisation itself, for all that had been effected, not only by the power of the gospel, but by the forces and influences of every kind that make for moral peace and progress, all that philosophy as well as religion has done, may seem to have gone to pieces and vanished away.

In the face of such a situation we asked ourselves what was to be done? What had the world come to? Were we to despair of human nature?

The first shock brought many sensitive minds near to despair. If this world war were the outcome of all our marvellous advances in the knowledge and mastery of the forces of Nature and improvements in the arts of life, from what quarter could we hope for any help to deliver us from a recurrence of like catastrophes?⁶

In this anguish, there was a prophetic realism which was repeated in even more threatening terms by W.J. Williams, in noting that it was exactly one hundred years since the Battle of Waterloo.

A century with a big war blazing at both ends, and by far the bigger blaze at the end nearest to ourselves! [....] Are they right after all, who tell us that the world is getting worse and worse? Taking the war gauge, it certainly looks like it when the Waterloo of 1815 is compared with the many times multiplied Waterloos of 1915. But the pessimists must not be allowed to score on that reckoning. The Waterloo of 1815 was the climax of a century of wasting wars; the Waterloos of 1915 represent the anti-climax of a century remarkable for nothing so much as the cultivation of the arts and industries of peace. The war of 1915 stands for a hideous anachronism.... [....] This end of the century is, unhappily, ablaze with war; can anyone imagine such a blaze at the end that will be reached in 2015? Only on the assumption that the course of civilisation will turn back upon itself and the world revert to the devilry of the Dark Ages.⁷

Just at this point, pessimism meant realism. The unusually prolonged period of peace, or at least freedom from a general European war, allowed the development of an unrealistic optimism concerning the possibilities of unredeemed human nature. Both Bryce and Williams expressed the anguish which had been caused by the conflict's severe assault on this pre-war optimism. Again, the fears of both men had a prophetic quality (which would have been no consolation to them). But perhaps their hopes for a remedy can be criticised. Williams' analysis broke down on the view

that war was an anachronism in a progressive civilisation. War, whether large or small, was war, and had always been a feature of nineteenth century history. But in criticising Williams' assumptions, it must be remembered that subsequent history has thrown doubt on their relationship to the realities of world history. Twentieth century history has shown that a major war is by no means an uncommon anachronism; describing the development of human capacities as "progress" has become much more doubtful, considering that these enlarged capacities are exploited as easily for destructive ends as for constructive ends; and British imperialism does not now seem as enlightened as it did to Imperial subjects at the turn of the century.

Some people identified causes of European civilisation's bankruptcy which were operating in all nations. Rev S.J. Serpell, in his retiring Presidential address to the 1915 Conference, mentioned the world's materialism and atheism.⁸ Canon F.B. Macnutt (an English Anglican preacher), after denying that Christ was King in either Germany or England, confessed:

Christ was not enthroned as King. Therefore...how could they charge upon God the evil results of disobedience and unfaithfulness to Him? Christendom, and not Christianity, was at fault; it was man's failure, not God's. We must charge it to our own folly and blindness, our wilfulness and stupidity, in substituting the gospel of the evolution of civilisation for the gospel of the salvation of Christ.⁹

Williams, in ending his note on the Waterloo centenary said:

Let God be honoured, and the nation will live; let God be forgotten, and the nation will perish. And whether 2015 shall see a world freer from the savage cruelties of war than 1915 sees will depend upon how far through the ascending years of the century the nations yield the honour that is due to God.¹⁰

Rev William Ready¹¹ summed up this view of civilisation perfectly:

We acknowledge that war is an outrage against civilisation. War! with one fell blow, threatens to demolish all the ideals for which civilisation stands. This war has outraged every canon and principle of civilisation, humanity, and religion. In this twentieth century we do not seem to have risen higher than paganism...in settling disputes by war.¹²

His answer to those asserting the '"breakdown of Christianity"', however, laid the blame for civilisation's failure on Germany:

This nightmare only besets those who fail to look below the surface. War between Christian nations is not necessarily a war between Christians. This war did not originate in Christianity, but in a philosophy which is anti-Christian. The country which forced this war is the home of Rationalism and Materialism. Their philosophers called into question Christian principles.¹³

Thus 'To stand by Christianity is to oppose Germany's militarism.' In fact, virtually all articles quoted above linked civilisation's failure with Germany's wrongdoing. This led to an alternative explanation of what had happened to "civilisation": it had been attacked, or, put more graphically, outraged.

This explanation was potentially more satisfying as a reason for fighting Germany. It made sense of the alleged "reasons" for Germany's initiation of the war (examined in the previous chapter), and it enabled Britishers to pose as both the defenders and the restorers of civilisation. This was summed up in G.K. Chesterton's words: '"Germany has enlightened us by falling over the precipice."¹⁴ How, then, could Britain benefit from this enlightenment in defending civilisation?

2. Britain's Righteousness Exalted

It was one thing to indicate that the problem which had caused the war lay deep in Western European civilisation; it was another to find sufficient reason in this to send thousands of young men away to Europe to contend for Britain's cause. Thus a tendency emerged to heap all the blame for the failure of whatever had failed onto Germany. This did not necessarily have to occur; it had not occurred to the same extent in previous large-scale wars. But a combination of factors created a situation where Methodists, or at least their leaders, stopped very little short of proclaiming a crusade.

Methodists subscribed to the doctrine of the just war, insofar as they considered the issue at all.¹⁵ John Wesley, as a devout Anglican, had adhered to the doctrine, and very rarely had later Methodists ever questioned Britain's participation in a war. But World War I strained the doctrine of the just war to the point where it began to seem inadequate.

The theory of the just war...is ultimately unsuited to the conditions of "total war", being neither intended nor designed to apply to conflicts where technologically sophisticated societies, armed with the most frightful instruments of destruction, struggle continuously for years on end. Although undertaken for ostensibly rational ends, the major wars of the twentieth century have been in practice fundamentally irrational in the broadest human terms.¹⁶

In 1914, this irrationality was a new experience for Britishers. Alastair Buchan, writing in 1966, posed an hypothetical "perceptive observer of international affairs in the year 1876",¹⁷ and compared his view of the possibilities of war with those of three successive generations of his descendants at thirty-year intervals. As far as the hypothetical man's son was concerned in 1906,

There was nothing in his experience to suggest that if war should break out among the European powers, it would lead to the total mobilization of their resources, that it would become a people's rather than a professional's conflict, and would tend to unite industrial powers against each other rather than disrupting their societies....¹⁸

He did not realise either, as did the hypothetical man's grandson in 1936, that "...the war aims of both sides [could] become totally obscured in the course of a European mass conflict...."¹⁹

The possibility that such an immense war could be continued beyond the point where the ends justified the means, which was the whole purpose of the delineation of what a just war involved, was utterly revolting to British subjects in 1914. Meaningless, unnecessary ruthlessness in pursuing war aims was seen as a rank violation of all principles of honourable conduct. Trench warfare seemed to mock all the values which had been built up over the centuries in order to protect human life. In such a situation, the choice was either to fit the new and anomalous experiences into the old value systems, or to challenge and reject the old value systems altogether. Wartime stresses and strains generally work against the possibility of thoroughgoing ideological conversions within individuals. New Zealand Methodists were convinced that Britain was fighting a just war. But the essentially gentlemanly caution of the doctrine of the just war seemed futile when they were confronted by the inhumanity of trench warfare.

The Christian Church possessed another potential explanation of war in the idea of the holy war. In many ways, this was an absolutised version of the just war, where ends and means became more extreme; as such, it was an

extreme standpoint for extreme times, and it offered a "more emotionally satisfying" interpretation of World War 1, as Marrin recognises.

...war on such an immense scale, demanding sacrifices which are by just war standards disproportionate to the hoped-for ends, must be waged for the most exalted interests of the human race. It is easier to pay the tariff in blood, to send one's son to a Verdun or a Passchendaele, if one believes that the enemy seeks to enslave the world; easier still when convinced one's own side fights for the eternal verities.²⁰

The rest of this chapter will examine the view that New Zealand Methodists increasingly adopted a holy war explanation of World War I. This was not a sudden abandonment of one viewpoint in favour of another; rather, it was the gradual, uneven stretching of the just war viewpoint till it became unrecognisable as the pre-war doctrine. The views that follow may seem surprising, but it must be remembered that Methodists had no opportunity to develop new viewpoints through calm, measured reflection. They were exploring unknown territory, both in ideology and experience.

Britain went to war, Methodists believed, in a protective role: to defend the safety and honour of Belgium and Britain (and, by implication, the Empire). It had always been part of British strategic interests to ensure that Belgian ports did not fall into enemy hands. Historically, this consideration had led Britain to attempt to maintain (or re-establish) the balance of power in Europe. For 200 years, the Power which had threatened this balance had been France. The rise of Germany in the late nineteenth century had shifted the balance of power in Europe, and elaborate readjustments were made, at the end of which Britain was bound to assist France against Germany. The invasion of

Belgium provided an opportunity to proclaim the justice of a course of action which Britain was obliged to follow for other reasons. Little of this was known to New Zealanders at the time, but considering the Germany which seemed to be emerging from the war, it was necessary to defend Belgium with all the might of the British Empire. And so Methodists claimed that if Belgium fell, Germany would gain such power over France, and such control in Western Europe, that the security of Britain and the Empire would be threatened.

The question is, "Little as we like war, how much more should we like the prospect of New Zealand becoming a German possession, with Germany foaming at everything English as it is to-day?" That can only be prevented in one way, and that is by the Allies making such a demonstration in force as to convince even Germany of the hopelessness of the endeavour to break through such bars of steel.²¹

But moral grounds for justifying Britain's actions seemed to be a much more fruitful approach. Like British Anglicans, New Zealand Methodists were angered by Germany's attack on a small, weak neighbouring State;²² this anger was intensified by Germany's violation of a treaty of neutrality in making the attack, and was intensified further by the flagrant disregard for the validity of such treaties which was revealed by the "scrap of paper" incident.²³ These factors were considered more than enough to justify Britain's participation in the war; indeed, Methodists could boldly proclaim the righteousness of Britain's cause.

No lust of territory has stained the motive of Britain in drawing the sword against Germany. ...Britain [has been left] no alternative but to defend her honour at the point of the sword. On the side of Britain, it is a battle for truth and righteousness if ever one such was fought on the face of the earth.²⁴

The absolutism of this boldness led Methodists to ascribe religious significance to Britain's cause.

Christ asks you to come in His name to avenge intolerable wrongs and violations of honourable treaties, to avenge outrages on women and children, and the deliberate and heartless trampling under the iron heel of all that is sacred to the human heart and the best institutions of human society.²⁵

When we see political honour flouted, solemn international obligations treated as scraps of paper, innocent and gallant Belgium ravaged, and when that hateful lust for power seeks to dominate the world and shape civilisation to its infernal pattern, then we answer never will we submit. War we hate, but war we prefer to the reign of the devil.²⁶

We are fighting ...for the highest possible principles - the principles of your faith. We are fighting for our plighted word. [....] We are fighting for the fundamental principles of the Christian faith. We say 'nay' to any man who tramples on the rights of a small people, and we say 'yea' to others who asked us to join in preventing those little people from being wiped out. [...] We are fighting to protect the weak against the ruthless strong, the cruel strong, the unscrupulous strong, and the inhuman strong, the men who abuse the strength the Almighty endowed them with. The most contemptible of men are those men to whom God has given strength and muscle, and who use it to oppress, to torture, to trample on, and to crush those who are weak. We are fighting for the protection of the weak against the bullying strong.²⁷

Rev J. Cocker summed up the Methodist view of the necessity for Britain to defend its honour, in the process finding a way to make strategic considerations a point of honour too.

The war has tested British honour and ideals. We have boasted of the freedom and liberty beneath the British flag, and we have declared ourselves to be the defenders of small States. We had pledged our word to Belgium that we would defend her from invasion. When the Germans invaded his country, King Albert appealed to England for help. Suppose England had stood by and seen Belgium become a vassal State of the German Empire, and France a third-rate European power. She would have stained her own honour. The alternatives were war or dishonour. Had she failed in her duty punishment would have come upon her, for with Germany in permanent possession of the [Belgian] coast, and intoxicated by her success, she would soon have found cause for war with England. Single-handed, England would have found it very hard to save herself from being defeated by the Huns. No, the moment for decision came, and England decided to fight for spiritual ideals. If ever there was a righteous war this is one. "If ye suffer for

righteousness' sake happy are ye." At the supreme moment Britain stood the test. Had she failed she would have lost her national soul. Never again would her plighted word have been relied upon, but now generations to come will point proudly to the day when England's honour was tested and she failed not. [....] We have fought for righteousness and Christian civilisation against pagan materialism, and against a nation which has a contempt for any civilisation not her own, and which has no sympathy with small nations or any regard for their nationality.²⁸

These statements indicate the ease with which the view of Britain's role as the defender of "civilisation" superseded the more sober view of the need to resist the general retrogression of "civilisation". The combination of the pressure of war and the tendency of churchmen to theologise the secular issues facing them made unpalatable a statement like: 'It will be found, possibly, that [the cause of righteousness] defies the limits of any geographical boundary-line.'²⁹ Apparent German wickedness, illustrated by the callousness towards Belgium and the campaign of atrocities, seemed to require an explanation of the conflict more sweeping than traditional doctrines allowed. Even the idea that Britain was restoring civilisation did not explain why only Germany had become so morally deranged as to lapse into satanic madness. Thus the idea of a German attack on civilisation, resisted by Britain, was much more appealing. It had the inherent advantage, too, of being much less vague than the other option; the more the problem was identified with the enemy power, the more wholeheartedly that power could be opposed. Thus as the problem was made more fundamentally idealistic and identified with Germany, so the answer became more fundamentally idealistic and identified with Britain.

So for any statement concerning Germany, the opposite

was true, explicitly or implicitly, concerning Britain. Where Germany had 'lost its soul',³⁰ Britain had found its soul: 'By her blood-red sacrifice in saving Belgium from the German wolf Britain was saving her own soul.'³¹

But in the light of the tremendous sacrifices so freely made in connection with this present war, who can doubt that the soul of England still lives? In what war that Britain ever waged have the hands of the nation been so clean, have the motives of the nation been so disinterested? With no thought whatever of territorial expansion, inspired only by what it has conceived to be the obligations of national honour and righteousness, Britain is pouring out its men in millions and its money in billions....³²

Where Germany had been taken over by the ideas of Nietzsche, which attacked Christianity's moral system and exalted force, Britain upheld this moral system and aimed to crush "Prussianism".³³

[Britain] has drawn its sword in a just and righteous cause ..., and ...almost any sacrifice would be worth while to avert the trampling down of human rights and liberties under the foul feet of the German Hun. The defeat of the Germany that has unmasked its hideous features in the light of this war would be in itself no small moral gain.³⁴

The best example of how Britain's cause was glorified in terms exactly opposed to those applied to Germany is an address by Rev A.T. Guttery, a leading British Primitive Methodist preacher.³⁵ Guttery's opinions received considerable airing in the Methodist Times during the war, partly in an effort to boost the newspaper's circulation among ex-Primitives in the united Church, who seem to have been rather bitter over aspects of the union which had finally been achieved.³⁶ But Guttery was a popular preacher with an ability to express emphatically and unhesitatingly what Methodists generally seem to have thought. Reported views on other subjects show that he was given to seeing issues in terms of

exact opposites, and concluding by claiming that the Church had to uphold the side of "light" and "progress" - whatever that was.³⁷ His simplistic thought and his passionate rhetoric led him to express rather extreme opinions in appealing phrases; thus his views caught on with Methodists easily, but were often divorced from reality.

Guttery began by asserting that amidst the war's horrors, British national consciousness had been newly born.

We realise, as never before, how great a thing it is to be British; a new and sacred love of country possesses us to-day. Britain is no longer a name on a map; it is a symbol on the heart; it is no longer merely the workshop of our toil, the market of our commerce and the arena of our country; it is the home of our love, the citadel of our freedom and the shrine of our faith.³⁸

The Church, he continued,

...shares the fervour of this new patriotism, she does not, she cannot stand aloof from the people in this modern sacrament. They are her children, her strength; without them she is an institution without message or force. She lives for them, and when they suffer she mourns, when they prevail for a freedom that is the glory of her faith, she will rejoice. We are Primitive Methodists, and we are British; our fathers helped to create this temple of liberty, and our sons will shed their blood to keep it clean and free.³⁹

Britain's cause was explained thus:

All we hold dear is at stake. We see not so much a war between troops in grey and heroes in khaki as a battle between ideals. No truce is possible; no peace is welcome that does not rest on victory. The war is between the philosophy of force and the faith of pity; between efficient machinery and free men; between Caesarism and Christianity; between a calculated brutality, a scientific savagery, and a social brotherhood and a humane conscience. It is a battle between the Black Eagle and the Red Cross, and to allow Berlin to crush Bethlehem would be to surrender all the grace of our evangel and all the hope of to-morrow. We will not be robbed of the work of our fathers.... The freedom of our faith, the sanctity of our homes, the honour of our women are all involved. For Britain to be defeated is to be robbed of all we hold sacred, and for that we will die rather than submit.⁴⁰

Having indicated Britain's cause in such definite terms, he could then claim:

War is always an infinite wickedness or a sublime devotion. There is no middle verdict, and ...in the immediate causes of this hideous conflict our hands are clean. I do not fear to pray for the victory of British arms, for that is my genuine rendering of the cry, "God defend the Right!"⁴¹

This was the most direct claim of a widely held conviction among Methodists. Rev J.T. Pinfold endorsed it:

With regard to the present war, Mr Asquith...stated with emphasis that the war has for its objects the dethronement of violence and the exaltation of love and justice. It is because we entered into it with this spirit that we are able to invoke upon our efforts the blessing of God.⁴²

Later in the war, W.J. Williams, in urging Methodists to persevere to the end, agreed:

Is it worth while holding fast? Well, is anything worth while? Is civilisation worth while? Is the triumph of truth and righteousness worth while? The greatest of all wars has shown itself to be the most horrible of all wars, and the heart sickens at the thought of the wild welter of all that is vile and hellish that it stands for. The shame for all this be on the guilty hands of those who are responsible for letting loose such a hell. Britain at any rate has nothing whatever to reproach itself with in this connection. With clean hands it entered the war, and with clean hands...it will come out of it.⁴³

Guttery continued by referring to the pacific intentions of the Church and the British nation, which became reconciled to the war only after the German invasion of Belgium.⁴⁴ If this pacifism had failed, at least they had been true to their principles, which had brought its own reward: 'We have created such a public conscience that all nations dread the verdict of provocation.'⁴⁵ Rev Paul W. Fairclough agreed.

There is an ancient saying that the voice of the people is the voice of God. Actions and character that the civilised world approves cannot be grossly wrong before the Highest Tribunal. In the present crisis the Grand Jury of the Nations is almost unanimously in our favour.... We thank God for the approval of mankind.⁴⁶

Guttery urged Britishers '...not to be extravagant in their confession of guilt and failure. There is a humility that is morbid; its accent is insincere. The conscience of Britain knows better; a khaki tunic is a better uniform than the white sheet just now.' The British national character had left Britain unprepared for and vulnerable to a European war; but this proved Britain's innocence of starting the war. Fairclough endorsed this, and explained it by Britain's concern with other things.

Now this war is purely a war of defence on our part. We did not begin it. We did not wish it. We did not prepare for it. War is not our national industry. It does not pay us. The enemy has nothing that we desire, not even his Kultur. War was hateful to us; we were educating ourselves away from it. We could hardly believe that anyone else wanted war, so foreign was it to our thoughts. [....]

It is true that we may be censured for this unreadiness; for positions like ours in the world are held like a challenge cup in sports, as long as we can defend it. But though we may be censured from this point of view, our unreadiness at least acquits us of guilt in seeking or beginning the war. [....]

Our unreadiness did not mean that we were idle. We had greater works on hand than war, and did not wish to be distracted from them.⁴⁸

What were these things? At this point, writers would generally recite the qualities shown in the deeds of Britain's glorious past.

We have unquestionably had a divine commission and an evangel to mankind. What we had we imparted. We had free trade in commodities, in ideas, in institutions. We found a savage, and we made him a citizen; we found a wilderness, we made it a garden; we found chaos, we made it harmony. Our mission has been to be a beacon light of liberty and of free institutions to the world; to plant free nations in the empty spaces of the earth; to be a pattern of chivalry when we strive; of honour when we give our bond; of honesty in all the marts of the globe; to break down the partition walls that divide nations; to send light to them that sit in darkness; to be strong against the oppressor, and stiff with the arrogant; but kindly to the weak and forbearing to the

ignorant.⁴⁹

This work had bonded the Empire together in love.

The Germans imagined that because the Dominions were not governed by a policy of frightfulness and kept under by mailed fist rule they could not be held as part of the Empire. The British Constitution has stood the tests and storms of centuries, and has been the admiration of other nations, which have modelled their form of Government according to that of Britain. The British Empire is composed of liberty loving people, who enjoy their free institutions and are governed by righteous laws....⁵⁰

So Guttery could declare that

A lofty purpose is the truest power. Just as some men have a charmed life and cannot die till a supreme purpose is accomplished, so it is with nations. What is the purpose of Britain in all this? ...it is the most unselfish that can be imagined. We have nothing to gain, much to lose; our all is pledged to save Europe and restore Belgium. We have a character of which we may be proud. Our form of civilisation has been of infinite value to the race. It is not free from faults, but it is tolerant, humane and free. This island has been the home of freedom for long generations. Here the oppressed have looked for championship, and not often have they looked in vain. [...]. ...the British Empire is the finest instrument in the world for the establishment of the Kingdom of God.⁵¹

So in terms echoing the 1915 Conference's view of the war,⁵² Britain's reason for fighting was declared. Guttery noted, in developing a theme beloved of Methodists, that Britain had a grimly settled resolve to win the war; but this resolve contained no "mafficking" or "hymns of hate"⁵³ Not only was the latter claim false, though widely believed; but the former claim was to have unfortunate consequences. Rev John Dawson⁵⁴ expressed the awful alternative to an Allied victory:

...there is but one duty, either secular or sacred, for one and for all who love God and right, who value life and liberty, who honour womanhood and children, and that is to destroy the Prussian military spirit which is at the foundation of all this chaos and carnage. In the interest of Germany itself, as of England and the world at large, in the interest of succeeding as well as of this generation, this spirit

must be conquered. Justice to the dead and protection for the living demand the death of the Prussian military spirit. I quite believe with Mr Bonar Law that "If militarism, according to the Prussian standard, is not crushed by the war, there is nothing to prevent a repetition of the present catastrophe, and the civilisation of Europe must go down before barbarism."⁵⁵

J.T. Pinfold expressed his confidence that Britain would succeed:

We sought no territory, we looked for no reward in gold or glory; all we want is righteousness. Our suffering is sacrificial, we are contending for the moral uplift of the race, and because of that we are sure of victory. Christianity teaches us that sacrifice of everything in a righteous cause will bring its appropriate blessing. God will reign in righteousness, and He is using us to extend His kingdom.⁵⁶

Guttery concluded his address by a similar expression of great confidence in the future of the Kingdom of Righteousness:

We are writing a great chapter of international honour and emancipation, and we are writing it with our blood. Our children's children will thrill with pride when they read the story of to-day. The courage of our men, the devotion of our women, and the patient daring of our aged folk will make them proud to spring from our loins. When peace is won by the shattering of militarism and the cleansing of wicked philosophies and distorted religions, when they possess the secure freedom we have won for them - and, God helping us, we will not sheathe the sword till it is secure - they will envy us the hour of our sacrifice, and they will understand the passion and ecstasy of our prayer, "God save England!" "God save the King!"⁵⁷

3. Methodism and the Holy War

In expressing these sentiments, how far had Methodists moved beyond the traditionally orthodox doctrine of the just war? Was this a holy war for Methodists? Koss says, quoting the example of Guttery: "Apostles of peace, [leading Free Churchmen] were transformed into holy warriors, who often asserted their patriotism with calculated truculence."⁵⁸

However, no matter how aptly it may have applied to a man like Guttery, the term is used too loosely here to be of much help. Marrin, who attempts to define the difference between the just war and the holy war,⁵⁹ says that apart from rare outbursts,

I have been unable to discover the holy war phenomenon as it will be described below among the leaders of Roman Catholicism or Nonconformity, or manifested to any great extent in their respective periodicals.⁶⁰

Part of the problem is that Marrin's terms are not defined carefully enough. The "just war" was a doctrine that had long been well defined by the Church, and Marrin records this definition. The "holy war" was a doctrine (if it can be called such) less well defined by the Church, and less well defined by Marrin. He gives one definition of a "holy war", or "crusade", thus:

As with the just war, the crusade has its proper object and authority only these are infinitely more exalted. Deus Vult!, "God wills it!" cried the knights assembled at Clermont to hear Urban II proclaim the First Crusade. The crusade is God's war, willed by Him, proclaimed by His church, and conducted under its aegis to defend or extend true religion. [....] Unlike a regular war, in which the soldier serves as a legal obligation, the crusader volunteers to fight as a religious obligation.⁶¹

There is an apocalyptic strain in the crusading mentality which can lead to psychological difficulties, as Marrin recognises:

Although capable of accomplishing great things against great odds, the crusading mentality is characterized by pigheadedness, self-righteousness, and fanaticism, unwholesome qualities at any time, extremely dangerous in time of war. The crusader is a moral absolutist who reverses the equation Might is Right. For him, Right is Might simply because God is the essence of righteousness; and as surely as day conquers night, the righteous must ultimately prevail. The crusader's confidence in the final victory of his cause...serves to radicalise a conflict by raising the level of violence and ruining chances of a sensible, magnanimous peace. All

weapons are permissible, all stratagems are legitimate in the battle against the earthly representatives of cosmic evil. And he who has wrestled with the enemies of the Lord is unlikely to settle for anything less than their unconditional surrender and humiliation.⁶²

Unfortunately, from this point Marrin's terms become confusing. He speaks of "The process of abandoning just-war concepts in favor of defining the war of a purely religious struggle...."⁶³ Under this non-technical definition, he analyses the way in which Belgium was rehabilitated and Britain justified in British Anglican minds. He then refers to the "crusading-apocalyptic war hysteria",⁶⁴ a position which he believes British Nonconformists did not reach. Does this mean that, for practical purposes at least, an intermediate position between the "just war" and the "crusade" existed? Perhaps it did; but Marrin does not hint at this. Accepting, then, that New Zealand Methodists moved beyond just war criteria in explaining World War I, how applicable are Marrin's terms?

If a distinction exists between a "religious interpretation"⁶⁵ and a "crusade", Methodists had certainly moved as far as the "religious interpretation". Almost all the factors Marrin discovers in analysing British Anglican efforts to justify Britain's cause can be found among New Zealand Methodists. Belgium was hallowed; the English gentleman's code of honour was upheld; the need to protect the European community from an outlaw was recognised; there was certainly confidence in Britain's sacred mission of liberty and justice for all nations; there was no hope that war itself would be conquered and Prussian militarism exterminated, so bringing in a better age. The problem is whether New Zealand Methodists had moved to a "holy war"

explanation. The problem, of course, is valid only if there was more than one position beyond the "just war" which could be adopted. Assuming that there was more than one position (as, depending on one's viewpoint, Marrin seems to imply, despite his definitions), a comparison of Marrin's evidence for the "crusading mentality" with the evidence presented in the previous section occasionally shows strikingly similar rhetoric. If "religious interpretation" and "crusade" mean the same thing, is Marrin's contention about Nonconformists false, at least of New Zealand Methodists?

At some points, there are undoubted similarities. Most of Rev Basil Bouchier's rhetoric would have been quite in place on Guttery's lips. It is possible, too, to detect an undercurrent of apocalypticism in Methodist circles. F.B. Meyer was quoted approvingly by a correspondent in these terms.⁶⁶ Later in the war, Meyer was one of a group of leading British churchmen who saw in the capture of Jerusalem by the British in 1917 the beginning of the biblical "last days".⁶⁷ Significantly, in the first few years after the war the subject of the "last things" enjoyed a popularity which it had never had before the war.⁶⁸ Lastly, Chaplain J.R. Sullivan⁶⁹ said: 'Christ's way today leads stright to the firing line and into the bayonet charge.'⁷⁰⁷¹

These examples do not negate Marrin's contention. Guttery was a leading preacher and his opinions were widely endorsed by Methodists; it seems that there was some apocalypticism among Methodists; and Sullivan's charge was probably not the only one such delivered during the war. But in no case were any of these views upheld as official Methodist positions; moreover, they emerged far less, it

seems, among New Zealand Methodists than among British Anglicans. Though some Methodist rhetoric matched the most frenzied Anglican rhetoric, it was very much less frequent. Methodist patriotism cannot be described to the same extent as a "crusading-apocalyptic war hysteria". In fact, the writer has not found any Methodist reference to the war as a "holy war". One reason seems to have been that Methodism was too aware of British national sins to go too far in its claims. In the article lengthily quoted above, Guttery attacked national waste, particularly through alcoholic liquors.⁷²

However, it must be noted that the doctrine of the just war emphasised the righteousness of God's cause rather than the imperfections of God's instruments; thus this cannot be seen as the main reason. There is no doubt that the just war doctrine was absolutised sufficiently for New Zealand Methodists to reach a point where for them the war became, for practical purposes at least, a "crusade". Firstly, it must be recognised that the "holy war" tended to be more an occasionally useful theory than a well defined doctrine (hence Marrin's definitional problems). Secondly, the "holy war" explanation was adopted through the considerable and little controverted stretching of the "just war" explanation. In different groups, the stretching was uneven. Thirdly, the fact the British Anglicanism was a State Church, unlike New Zealand Methodism, must have been a very important factor. New Zealand Methodism could afford to have a rather more independent outlook, though in fact social pressures drastically reduced the nonconformity of the New Zealand Methodist stand. In the end, the explanation of British

Anglicanism's extremism remains elusive; the most surprising feature is that the British Anglican position was not very extreme at all in comparison with the attitudes of other denominational groups at the same time.

The outbreak of World War I so shattered the optimism of Methodists concerning the future that civilisation itself seemed to be bankrupt and in need of redemption. Soon, however, German atrocities seemed to indicate that civilisation needed to be defended rather than restored. The vilification of Germany produced a commensurate exaltation of Britain, and the war increasingly seemed to assume the characteristics of a religious or holy war. In espousing this view, however, New Zealand Methodism did not develop its implications as fully as did British Anglicanism, perhaps partly because New Zealand Methodism was not a State Church.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER 4

- 1 'The War' (editorial note), NZMT, 22/8/1914, p.8.
- 2 'The Crime of War' (editorial note), NZMT, 8/8/1914, p.8.
- 3 Nonconformity in Modern British Politics, Hamden, Archon Books, 1975, pp.125-31.
- 4 'Christmas and War' (editorial), NZMT, 24/12/1915, p.8.
- 5 See above, Ch.3, p.76.
- 6 'The War and Christianity: The Immediate Duty of Christian Men', NZMT, 22/1/1916, p.3. Reprinted from the Quiver.
- 7 'Waterloo and After' (editorial note), NZMT, 26/6/1915, p.1. cf. his earlier words on anachronistic barbarism:

It is a terrible anachronism that the foremost nations of the world should be engaged in a struggle that is essentially barbaric. Unhappily, the very worst features of barbarism are being reproduced by nations that claim to represent the highest culture. [...] ...when the passion for war gains the mastery the brute resumes dominion in the human breast, and all the boasted gains of culture are scorched as by a blast from hell.

('The Call to Prayer' (editorial), NZMT, 3/10/1914, p.1.)
- 8 See above. Ch.2, pp.61-2.
- 9 'How War Affects Christian Faith' (sermon extracts), NZMT, 13/11/1915, p.3. The last sentence was probably J. Cocker's comment.
- 10 'Waterloo and After', p.1.
- 11 Entered the Bible Christian ministry in 1885; President in 1912; Chairman of the District four times; became a Supernumerary in 1926. What later became the Dunedin Central Mission was established through Ready's ministry.
- 12 'Religion and the War' (paper), NZMT, 10/6/1916, p.9.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Quoted in A.T. Guttery, 'The Victory of the Spirit', NZMT, 23/12/1916, p.5.
- 15 On this point, see above, Ch.2, pp.43-46 For a discussion of the doctrine of the just war, see Marrin, pp.119-23.
- 16 Ibid., p.123.
- 17 War in Modern Society: An Introduction, London, Watts, 1966, p.34.
- 18 Ibid., p.35.
- 19 Ibid., p.37.
- 20 Marrin, pp. 123-4.
- 21 'The Call to Arms' (editorial note), NZMT, 9/1/1915, p.8.
- 22 New Zealand too was small and weak; what psychological impact might this have had?

- 23 For the influence of these factors on British Anglican attitudes, see Marrin, pp.127-32.
- 24 'For the Right' (editorial note), NZMT, 19/9/1914, p.8.
- 25 Sullivan, J.R., 'Enlist in the King's Army' (sermon), NZMT, 22/1/1916, p.13. Text: John 10:9. Reprinted from the Standard.
- 26 Guttery, A.T., 'The Message of the Church to Britain' (address), NZMT, 18/9/1915, p.3.
- 27 'Mr Lloyd George on the War' (address), NZMT, 31/3/1917, p.12.
- 28 'Has the Empire Stood the Test?' (leader), NZMT, 30/9/1916, p.8.
- 29 See above, Ch.2, p.59.
- 30 See above, Ch.2, p.54.
- 31 'Military Matters' (editorial note), NZMT, 18/3/1916, p.1. Report of an address by Rev W.A. Sinclair.
- 32 '"Cheer Up!" A New Year's Watchword' (editorial), NZMT, 8/1/1916, p.8.
- 33 See above, Ch.3, pp.80-1
- 34 'Will the War be Worth its Cost?' (editorial), NZMT, 10/7/1915, p.8.
- 35 'The Message of the Church to Britain', p.3.
- 36 On May 1, 1915, just over two years after Methodist Union had been achieved, the format of the Methodist Times was changed. While the writer has been unable to find any explicit references to the suggestion that the layout was altered to placate the ex-Primitives in the united Church, certain evidence points to this conclusion. J. Cocker, the ex-editor of the Primitive Methodist, became the new Associate Editor, and featured a column which included a fairly substantial element of news and opinion from British Primitive circles. The altered layout, too, copied the old layout of the Primitive Methodist. On the union itself, naturally, there is little evidence of bitterness, because people did not rush to express their views on the matter. So stray indications show that the union had its problems. The major indication of problems was simply that figures for membership and attendance in the first few years after 1913 did not match those claimed by the separate denominations when uniting (see Coming of Age, p.9; also comments on the 1916 Conference, ibid., p.30).
- 37 e.g. 'The Great Strike' (editorial note), NZPM, 1/6/1912, p.130. Reprinted from the Primitive Methodist Leader.
- 38 'The Message of the Church to Britain', p.3,
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Ibid. cf. Rev Thomas R. Richards' description of the war as '...the great battle between Autocracy and Imperialism and the struggle between bondage and liberty....' ('The Sacrificial Life: The Call of the Hour',

- NZMT, 17/2/1917, p.9) Richards' career: entered the ministry in 1895; President in 1925; Chairman of the District twelve times; became a Supernumerary in 1935.
- 41 'The Message of the Church to Britain'. p.3. Note the striking similarity of the first sentence with R.H. Tawney's remark: "War is either a crime or a crusade." (Quoted by Marrin, p.125) Alastair Buchan's devastating comment on it also applies to Guttery's statement:
- This is an exceedingly dangerous view for it leads directly away from all considerations of moderation in the use of force to protect the interests of the state, and towards those ideas of a moral or holy war, of one or a group of states arrogating to themselves the right to judge the rectitude of their own cause and to use unlimited force to prosecute it....
- (Buchan, p.22)
- 42 'Benefits of War', NZMT, 24/6/1916, p.4.
- 43 '"Hold Fast!'" (editorial) NZMT, 17/8/1918, p.8.
- 44 This at least was no vain boast concerning Guttery himself. On August 21, 1914, he had proclaimed:
- The policy of war for Britain is the reign of madness.... The duty of the Church is plain. It must declare the will of God, which is brotherhood, the gospel of Bethlehem, which is peace, and the evangel of Calvary, which is the dominion of love.
- (Quoted in Koss, p.127, from the Primitive Methodist Leader)
- 45 'The Message of the Church to Britain', p.3.
- 46 'God and War' (address), NZMT, 27/11/1915, p.9. Text: Psalms 46:7.
- 47 'The Message of the Church to Britain', p.3.
- 48 'God and War', p.9; emphasis original
- 49 Ibid. cf. above, Ch.2, pp.55-6
- 50 'Has the Empire Stood the Test?' p.8.
- 51 'The Message of the Church to Britain', p.3.
- 52 See above, Ch.2, p.65
- 53 cf. A.T. Guttery, 'Some War Problems', NZMT, 10/7/1915, p.3.
- 54 Entered the Primitive ministry in 1888; President of the Primitive Methodist District Conference in 1898; President of the Methodist Church in 1915; General Secretary of the New Zealand Alliance 1909-25; died in 1925.
- 55 Retiring Presidential address (1916 Conference), NZMT, 4/3/1916, p.5; quotation's source unknown.
- 56 'Benefits of War', p.4.
- 57 'The Message of the Church to Britain', p.3.
- 58 Koss, p.127.

- 59 Marrin, pp.119-25.
- 60 Ibid., p.135.
- 61 Ibid., p.124.
- 62 Ibid., pp.124-5
- 63 Ibid., p.125
- 64 Ibid., p.141
- 65 Ibid., P.130
- 66 Ibid., p.140
- 67 See above, Ch.3, p.34.
- 68 NZMT, 19/1/1918, p.15. One of these leading British churchmen was a leading Wesleyan, Rev Dinsdale T. Young. W.J. Williams officially controverted the group's views in the same issue ('Two Manifestos' (editorial), p.8).
- 69 In this period, popular titles on the life after death sold well (Coming of Age, p.40).
- 70 Entered the ministry in 1912; enlisted as a soldier almost as soon as the war began; very narrowly escaped being killed at Gallipoli; miraculously recovered his voice after thinking that his preaching days were over; became a successful chaplain until incapacitated by ill-health; was given permission to reside in England without pastoral charge; seems to have dropped out of the ministry altogether in 1920, but no record of this in the 1921 Minutes of Conference.
- 71 'Enlist in the King's Army', p.13.
- 72 'The Message of the Church to Britain', p.3.

CHAPTER V

EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY IN A MODERN WAR

The previous two chapters have shown how the unprecedented horrors of World War I weakened the adequacy of the doctrine of the just war; the war was increasingly seen as a crusade between the forces of evil and the forces of good, represented by Germany and Britain respectively. It became a bindingly sacred obligation to participate in this "holy war", and to lay down one's life in the battle for civilisation and humanity acquired a newly exalted religious significance. This created problems not just for the doctrine of the just war, but for all the evangelical doctrines of salvation. This chapter will examine the way in which Methodism attempted both to hold to their evangelical doctrines and to modify them in order to explain the significance of the sacrifice of vast numbers of soldiers in a righteous cause.

1. The Test of Christianity

As far as Methodists were concerned, the root cause of World War I was clear. European civilisation had rejected Christianity in favour of materialistic atheism, and was paying the price. This rejection was startlingly exemplified by Germany, which had launched such a ferocious attack on the rest of Europe that Britain and its Allies were attempting to preserve what was left of European civilisation. Defeat of Germany would enable European civilisation to be purified and reborn along more peaceful and reverential lines; Christianity would emerge as the vital factor enabling European civilisation to recover from its material and moral

wreck.

...a war, such as the present, is, in reality, from the Divine side, "the Crucible of God," in which the process of separation and purification goes forward. The fires of God are now trying man's work to see of what sort it is, and nothing will emerge from the ordeal but sterling values. Our civilization, our national ideals of life, our faith, and our characters are being subjected to the supreme test.¹

...among the abiding victories of peace will be the opportunity to show that the Gospel of the Prince of Peace has survived this latest assault, and holds the field as the truest philosophy ...for the unit and the nation. How completely and, let us hope, finally, the war has exposed the failure of all the rivals to our gospel of redemption! Scientific philosophy, as represented by the modern doctrine of the superman, expounded in such writers as Treitschke and Nietzsche; agnosticism, as seen in the general attitude of the learned classes of Europe to revealed religion; materialism, as seen in the general scramble for wealth and the passion for pleasure; civilisation, as understood in Germany's doctrine of kultur which exalts mere intellectualism and nationality to a cult, almost to a religion, making them the end of existence; all these modern idols which the nations have set up lie humiliated and broken in the general wreckage of the war. ...history offers no parallel to the greatness of the Church's opportunity. The war has made us feel that civilisation itself, apart from the sanctions of Christ's religion, may become an unmitigated curse. As the exponent of the positive teaching of Jesus, the Church may confidently press its Gospel, knowing that there is now no rival to its witness, no worthy competitor to its solemn claims.²

However, the war had helped to question even the Gospel message which the Church possessed. Evangelical doctrines had been undermined by nineteenth century confidence that humanity was advancing (if apparently slowly sometimes) towards a golden age.

...during recent years there has been a tendency to manipulate the Gospel in the interests of a rosy view of human nature. Undue emphasis has been placed upon the necessity of a change in the social environment. It has been proclaimed ad libitum that education and a fuller social liberty will accomplish all that is necessary for the human race. The need of a New Birth has been tacitly denied. This "Gospel of Roses" is now in the crucible, and it is being destroyed. The facts of life and the Word of God are against it. The world knows that education cannot

eradicate the beast from the heart of man. Bitter as is the price we have to pay for our enlightenment, it will be worth it, if men, through collapse and anguish, come once more to listen to the voice of God, and to obey it.³

The doctrine of the new birth, or regeneration, was a doctrine which early Methodists had specially emphasised as one of the central doctrines of the Gospel. The war destroyed much of the confident liberal heraldry of a coming golden age, but it newly emphasised the value and importance, for Methodists, of the Cross.

...we recognise as never before that it is the one force that is going to hold the world together. In the midst of all the wrecks of time the cross abides. [.....]

[.....] Before the awful war broke out the nations were trusting to many forces to save them, education, self-interest, commerce, force. These have snapped under the fearful strain put upon them, and have proved impotent for peace and righteousness. Daily events all too plainly show that science has made war more hellish than ever. But amid the ruins there is given us a revelation of what will hold the world together. It is the despised cross of Calvary. The half-buried cross lifts up its head above the carnage proclaiming redemption.⁴

This renewed emphasis on the Cross of Christ, however, did not necessarily direct Methodists to the doctrine of regeneration as early Methodists had espoused it. In fact, the concentration on the Cross was the result as much of the sacrifices made by the soldiers fighting for the Allied cause as of the undermining of the "Gospel of roses". Christ's self-sacrifice was seen as the supreme example of what British soldiers were doing every day; so while Methodists focused on the Cross again, there was a tendency to view it in liberal theological terms rather than evangelical terms. There was much potential for confusion in a statement like Viscount Bryce's:

The gospel of Christ is the strongest force...because

it appeals to all men, and not to those only who are fit to receive learning and philosophy. And, further, it has been, and is, strong because it appeals to the noblest and deepest parts of human nature. [...] The Gospel...[gives] the message of Love-the Love of God to man and of men to one another - and it [tells] of the sublimest self-sacrifice for others that was ever made.⁵

The self-sacrifice of the soldiers was viewed in such exalted terms that the uniqueness and necessity of the self-sacrifice of Christ on his Cross was tacitly and unconsciously undermined.

2. The Self-Sacrifice of the Soldiers

The war proved popular from the start, and large numbers of New Zealand young men volunteered for service in defence of the British Empire's honour and existence. The necessity of this was considered deplorable, especially as these young men were much needed for developing a young country like New Zealand.⁶ But Methodists were proud to send them away, and were consistent in strongly urging young men to enlist. Young Methodists seem to have responded well to these calls, if the claims of Rev Albert C. Lawry⁷ (President in 1916) are to be believed. Problems over the misrecording of the religious status of Methodists, even clergymen, as Anglicans led to an investigation of the churches by Lawry in order to discover how many young men had enlisted from each church. In his retiring address to the 1917 Conference, Lawry reported:

From our congregations 6200 men, young and mostly single, have gone to fight for the Empire. This was the total, when less than 70,000 of the First Division had been enrolled by the Defence authorities, very nearly 9 per cent. (There were not many of our boys left for the ballot of conscription.)⁸

Table 5.1: Religious Denominations of Enlisted Soldiers in 1917

Denomination	¹ 25th		² 28th		³ Ballot		Census 1916
	Total	%age	Total	%age	Total	%age	
Anglican	32760	46.50	35777	45.29	10352	39.21	42.90
Presbyterian	16431	23.32	18316	23.19	7077	26.08	24.36
Roman Catholic	8711	12.37	9721	12.31	4495	17.03	14.17
Methodist	4973	7.06	5525	6.99	1907	7.22	9.91
Baptist	882	1.25	978	1.24	348	1.32	1.95
Congregational	397	0.56	425	0.54	126	0.48	0.77
Others	6291	8.93	8248	10.44	2097	7.94	5.94
Total	70445		78990		26402		

Sources: AJHR, 1917, H-19B, H-19D, and H-19C respectively;
for Census column, see Appendix V.

Notes: 1. Number of adherents of each religious denomination embarked on active service up to and including the 25th Reinforcements.
2. Number of adherents of each religious denomination embarked on active service up to and including the 28th Reinforcements.
3. Number of adherents of each religious denomination of members of the Expeditionary Force Reserve called up by ballot numbers 1-7 inclusive.

What credence can be given to Lawry's claims? According to official statistics of denominations of soldiers enlisted in the N.Z.E.F., Anglican representation is up by about three per cent on declared census adherence, Presbyterian representation down by one per cent, Catholic representation down almost two per cent, Methodist representation down almost three per cent, and Baptist and Congregational representation down significantly. The first impression is

that Anglicans were much more zealous in enlisting than those of other denominations. At first glance, the representation in the first seven ballots seems to confirm this view, Anglican representation among those conscripted being significantly down on its representation among all enlisted soldiers, while Presbyterian and Catholic representation is significantly up.

But statistics can deceive, and Methodist contemporaries certainly thought that these statistics were deceptive. Aggrieved Methodists cited many cases of the misrecording of soldiers' denominations. Chaplain F.T. Read⁹ maintained:

Again and again I found on board the hospital ship that those who had C. of E. on their cards were either Methodist, Baptist, or Congregational, so that I ignored the cards and asked the men myself to what Church they were attached.¹⁰

These denominations were all significantly under-represented in the enlistment statistics by comparison with the census statistics; even more importantly, none of them were "Established" Churches as were the Presbyterian Church (in Otago and Southland) and Anglican Church (in the rest of New Zealand).¹¹ In his retiring address, Lawry produced evidence of so much administrative inaccuracy that he was able to quote an 'experienced chaplain' (whose denomination was not revealed): "You can safely say that the treatment of the Methodists in the N.Z.E.F. verges near persecution."¹²

"Persecution" is a fairly strong accusation to make, and it perhaps says more about Methodist attitudes to the Anglican Church than about the military authorities' attitudes to Methodists. Some military men undoubtedly showed a certain amount of bloodymindedness on this issue; it is likely that in many more cases, harassed recruiting staff

did not want to be unduly bothered with precision in recording something as inconsequential to them as a recruit's denominational adherence. Whether or not these factors can account for such a wide discrepancy as that shown is unknowable; what is certain is that the wave of Methodist anti-Anglicanism dating from the middle of the nineteenth century had not yet subsided.

The official statistics contradict Lawry's claims in at least one important particular. Lawry claimed that there were 'not many' Methodists left for the conscription ballots; but 1907 conscripted Methodists is a considerable number, whatever doubts may be entertained of the general value of these statistics. Despite this, Lawry's enquiry was sufficiently methodical to require serious notice, and though his claimed percentage of eligible Methodist men who had enlisted is almost certainly exaggerated (all denominations probably exaggerated their loyal contributions in their keenness to be seen to be supporting the war effort), his impressionistic conclusions must be given some weight.

I am proud to say that there can be no doubt that of the eligible young men in the Methodist congregations, from 92 to 95 per cent have gone to the war. We do not know how they are entered in the Army Lists, but we know, better than any other can, how many we have sent from our own homes and schools and churches. In many cases, every eligible man is gone. In some there is not a young man left.¹³

In sacrificing their possibilities so willingly, these young volunteers were intensely admired. The bloody campaign at Gallipoli soon showed, too, that their marvellous spirit of self-sacrifice did not stop at enlistment, but extended into the fighting too. The manner in which the soldiers bore the terrible carnage of this campaign arrested the attention

of New Zealanders.

The newspapers are full of letters from our soldier boys, setting forth in graphic detail their experiences in actual warfare. The terrible tragedy of that record can scarcely anywhere be matched, and yet nothing is more marvellous than the comparative nonchalance with which the story is told. There is no attempt to pile up the agony. If a fellow stopped a bullet it was just his luck. A deed of valour worthy of a V.C. was just a fellow doing his bit.¹⁴

Methodists eulogised the heroism of the soldiers.

Anzac Day, April 25, 1915, will ever be a great day in Australasian history. On that day our soldiers made that brilliant landing on the Gallipoli Peninsula and proved themselves worthy of the stock from which they sprang. They proved that the present generation is as heroic as any in the past. It only required the call to heroism and the heroic in their nature responded. We shall no longer be compelled to look into the dim past for our heroes. We no longer need to live upon tradition. The present is the day of heroes, and Anzac will ever be dear to Australasians. We are proud of the name and all it means. [....] Our soldiers died for us. They shed sacrificial blood while we were living amid scenes of peace and prosperity; they shed their blood for us and passed through the Gallipoli campaign in defence of Australia and New Zealand.¹⁵

Moreover, they found great satisfaction in the soldiers' willingness to make what was called the 'supreme sacrifice', and were in no doubt of its significance.

But when these young men took their lives in their hands and went forth to face the risks of war they established a claim of the highest moral value on the whole community. A sudden danger arose that threatened the safety of the Empire. That danger could only be averted by such sacrifices as were involved in the resort to the grim arbitrament of war. Those who left to make such sacrifices owed no more to the Empire, and were under no more obligation to sacrifice themselves for the Empire's protection, than those who remained behind. The alternative to their making such sacrifices would be that we should be the victims of the most cruel and infernal despotism that has so far found a place in history. They made no song about it when they went away, but the simple and heroic fact is that these 620 Methodist boys, and the thousands of others who have fallen in this war, have laid down their lives for us.¹⁶

Having claimed that the soldiers were sacrificing their

lives for the rest of the people, comparisons with Christ's self-sacrifice for the human race became natural. The absolutising religiosity of Methodists led them to see all facets of life in terms of Christ's nature and claims, and being convinced of the rightness and goodness of the soldiers' actions, it was a natural progression to see both kinds of self-sacrifice in similar terms. Thus self-sacrifice for others was seen as the most vital truth in the universe, and Christ as its greatest exponent:

The underlying law of the world we live in is that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of anything." ...gain comes through loss, and life through death. The explorer dies for the increase of knowledge, the missionary perishes for the heathen, the patriot sheds his blood for his country, and our Lord died on Calvary for the race. It is the only method of extending any kingdom, human or divine. [....] The Lord who decreed it thus became subject to his own law. He who decreed that someone must be poorer before others could become richer, could not be the Redeemer and escape the cross.¹⁷

Rev T.R. Richards agreed; for him, true nobility was found only in the sacrificial spirit.

Enemies said: "He saved others, himself he could not save." But it is ever true of all sacrificial life that it obliterates self and in the mystery of love stoops to serve.

[....]

This is the spirit that lives and burns in all true empire-builders, and it is this fine truth, touched to its final issues, that explains our far-flung Empire.

[....]

This is the test of all true life today. "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall keep it into life eternal." All true life is red with sacrifice. This truth is at the heart of all things; it is the central teaching of revealed faith.¹⁸

Such a spirit, shown by the soldiers, seemed to confirm the value and indispensability of the Christian revelation for

the world's salvation.

It is becoming clearer and clearer that we need not be ashamed of the cross, and if we have spoken of Calvary with bated breath, hitherto, we may now proclaim it from the housetops with confidence. Thousands of the best of our manhood, who had no part in plunging the world in sorrow and blood, are imperilling their lives to save civilisation and Christianity. They have caught something of the spirit of Christ, and are taking up their cross and following Him. Because they are in danger we live in safety, and because they die we live.¹⁹

Such self-sacrifice issued a challenge to those who the soldiers had left behind - not just those who could enlist but still had not volunteered, but everyone else as well.

²⁰
Rev John Dukes thought that everyone had previously been living too selfishly and callously; the time had come, as the soldiers were demonstrating, to exchange the selfish life for the '...higher, purer, wealthier, altruistic life, the life lived for others.'²¹ Dukes extolled, rather riskily, the virtues of the life of service to the State.

If any man accounts the lower selfish individual life as of greater importance than his life of service in relation to the State, and shrinks from the performance of duty for the sake of escaping suffering and death, he may, by shirking his duty, find immunity from physical suffering, but he shall lose the higher life of the soul....²²

The way to keep one's soul was to respond to the honourable and valorous self-sacrifice of the soldiers with a like sacrifice; if such sacrifice was forthcoming, Methodists could be confident of the future.

We are called upon to-day to sacrifice. Let us rise up and prove worthy of the priceless sacrifice that has been made for us by the heroes now beyond the red mist of war. Let us make the Supreme Sacrifice, if need be; it is the way to life. [....] When this call of "the inner imperative" comes to us, may it find us in the way of duty, offering the "utmost for the highest". [....] Let this spirit become incarnate in us, and the future is safe.²³

Animated by this kind of spirit, men like Chaplain J.R.

Sullivan could confidently link the way of Christ with the actions of the soldiers.

The acceptance of Christ's loving invitation, he said in closing, meant sacrifice and unselfish renunciation, and for the young men of New Zealand he knew of no higher Christian duty than to enlist in the King's Army. [....] Christ's way was the way of self-sacrifice, of unadulterated unselfishness, of honourable surrender of life, with its beauty, its wealth, its clean prospects, and the sweetest associations to the service and protection of others. That was the way the soldiers were going on the battlefields of Flanders and Turkey. Today Christ's way led straight to the firing-line and into the bayonet charge.²⁴

3. Evangelicalism and the Holy War

While such notions of Christ's call with regard to the war may have been popular, they raised doctrinal problems for Methodists. In any case, by World War I, Methodist doctrine was not a unified, coherent, and clearly defined body of thought accepted by all Methodists. But the new emphases that emerged during the war only added to the confusion, and were themselves so confused that they did not long survive the war. The rest of this chapter will examine the problems that the belief in the holy war (examined in the previous two-and-a-half chapters) created for evangelical theology, and then place these problems in the context of a theological situation already quite confused.

The war created an early and fairly obvious problem for anyone who held that for Britain this war was either a just war or a holy war: what did the spectacle of opposing forces asking God to let their armed forces succeed mean? W.J. Williams' early explanation was that God's purpose was the triumph of righteousness.

The hope of victory in connection with this war that does not find its inspiration in the triumph of righteousness, betrays its origin in the unhealthy

ambitions that have made this war possible. Lifting up the heart to God means sharing in a godlike conception of the whole situation, which makes infinitely more of the issue as it affects humanity than as it affects nationality.²⁵

For Williams, the decisive issue of prayer was God's will, not a person's wishes.

No prayer is successful that is not devoid of all selfishness of motive. The pattern prayer for all time and for all conditions was that which, after the expression of personal desire, arrived at the high pitch of absolute self-surrender, "Nevertheless not my will but Thine be done." This is the underlying synthesis which unites Britons and Germans who are praying on opposite sides. If there is sincerity in their prayers the supreme consideration will be, neither that Britain should succeed nor that Germany should succeed, but that the will of God should be accomplished.²⁶

Both sides believed that they were fighting for justice and freedom; so

Who is to decide which is right? Who but the one God to whom both Germans and Britons pray? If prayer is not a willingness to submit the issue to that one infallible Judge and Father of us all, what is it worth?²⁷

Potentially, such a viewpoint could lead to problems; what confidence could people have that the British cause was righteous after all? This problem does not seem to have worried anyone; it was necessary and right to defend Belgium, and German atrocities proved the malevolence of German designs. But this view created its own problems. Several correspondents complained of the lack of Christian charity being shown towards Germany, and insisted that the Kaiser's wickedness only proved that he needed to be prayed for; in any case, this was a Christian duty enjoined in the New Testament.²⁸ However, the correspondents were probably the exception rather than the rule, and it is noticeable that such arguments were not advanced after 1915.

A more significant theological puzzle arose from the

heroic deaths of the soldiers. If Britain was waging a holy war for the forces of God against the forces of Satan, what happened to the soldiers who died in this deeply holy cause, especially those who had not at any known time surrendered their lives to Christ? Here was the single issue that most threatened evangelical orthodoxy (which had become confused enough anyway). The logical progression of the holy war explanation of World War I, as described above, was that the soldiers who died in the service of Britain's cause, whatever their religious belief, went straight to heaven. People realised that this simply clothed in Christian language the Muslim idea that soldiers who died in a jihad went straight to paradise; nevertheless, the problem of reconciling the holy war and evangelical theology became acute at this point.

Part of the difficulty was that people's deepest feelings were involved. It was not merely a question of attempting to reconcile apparent theological opposites (a problem which was not new), but also of meeting the emotional needs of the bereaved. Moreover, the new truths that seemed to be awaiting discovery also seemed to open a path enabling Methodists to return to the evangelical certainties that so consoled their forefathers. Williams, noting the impact of the suffering that the war was creating, denied the Muslim tenet of the soldier's eternal reward for fighting in a righteous cause, but commented on the attention that was being directed to the future life:

In our congregations there are at the present time hundreds of people whose souls are hungering for a message of consolation and hope. They are longing to hear about Heaven and the eternal world. Preach about the future life. Dogmatise about it. Preach about that land where the saints of the ages have foregathered. Let this "Lost Chord" in our preaching

be touched again; sing about Paradise. Our fathers sang about it, and the thought of that everlasting home of the saints increased their spirituality on earth.²⁹

So what did the self-sacrifice of the soldiers really mean, in terms of evangelical theology?

A popular text, in extolling the self-sacrifice of the soldiers, was Christ's saying, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."³⁰ Williams attacked the application of this text to the soldiers by setting it in its proper context - the words of Jesus to his disciples on the night before his crucifixion; the verse concluded: "Ye are My friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." Williams commented: 'The pledge of friendship between Christ and his Apostles was found in a willingness to die for each other'³¹ - a willingness which was translated into reality for many of them. To refer this pledge to the self-sacrifice of the British soldiers in World War I involved the problem mentioned above - the drift towards the Muslim tenet. It implied that '...the same high moral and spiritual quality must be claimed for every man who dies on the battlefield, irrespective of character or nationality.'³² The issue of character was important; according to traditional evangelical orthodoxy, a person could not get to heaven by good motives - these were works, and salvation was by faith alone. Williams' interpretation of the text's meaning for the soldiers' sacrifice recognised this:

What Christ said as recorded in John xv.,13, has been an inspiration to the noblest deeds that have been wrought in human history, and it will always hold its place as denoting the high-water mark of human attainment. How far that triumphant love has entered into the motive of those who have died in war is a matter concerning which God alone can be the judge. It is possible to recognise the nobility of their sacrifice without committing ourselves to a view

of that sacrifice which ignores conditions of salvation and fitness for eternal life that are of the very essence of our evangelical faith.³³

Yet even here, the grasp on evangelical orthodoxy was shakey. Fifteen months later, Williams espoused the view he had attempted to confute in this editorial.³⁴ The danger of a comparison of the soldiers' deaths with Christ's death was always present.

...in these days we are perplexed and almost distracted by problems which unaided reason and natural religion cannot solve. [The deaths of millions of soldiers] bring us to the open grave of those who task in life seems unfinished.

[....]

It is, however, worth while remembering in passing that our great sacrifice for sin, the Lamb of God offered Himself in the very prime and vigour of manhood, without a physical defect, when He was fairer than the children of men, He offered Himself, without spot, to God. And our surrender of life reaches its highest sacrificial value when it partakes of some of these features.³⁵

But this sacrifice only became meaningful if a future life existed to balance the daily tragedies against the benefits accruing from them.

...to the man who is a believer in immortality, and accepts the Christian position and all it involves, [our holy religion] has much to say to him. When he has been brought by grace into the blessed realisation of [the sacrificial life], he will be glad to hear on the authority of this Book that these brave heroes who were in Christ, and who apparently died before their time, were simply promoted to higher service.³⁶

This, of course, answered the problem easily enough for the dead soldier who had been a known Christian. (Christians bereaving for a dead Christian relative understood this well enough anyway.) But what happened to the others? Rev Henry L. Blamires³⁷ believed in the theory of the 'larger hope'. Two factors influenced the formation of this theory. Some soldiers at the front who surrendered to Christ never had a chance to tell anyone else; others never had the claims of

Christ clearly presented to them in the course of their lives. Were this second group damned? An earlier age, with more or less confidence, would have said that they were damned; God was the righteous Judge of all people. This age, however, felt that such damnation was most unfair on God's part; so many of the damned never had a chance to make a clear decision from a full understanding of Christ's claim, especially the heathen races which lived in lands that did not know that the Gospel even existed. This age was dominated by the doctrine of the fatherhood of God. Blamires developed the implications of this doctrine, as demonstrated in the life of Jesus:

Now our desire to give comfort must not blind us to the truth. But what is the truth? It is that God Who judges us is also our Heavenly Father. And He judges us through His Son, Who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and Who kept in touch with Judas, while there was any hope of saving him, and saw good in publicans and sinners—in Zacchaeus and Mary Magdalene — where others only saw evil. God is the same yesterday, to-day and forever. He is our Judge here as well as our Father, and He does not assume sterner qualities, nor cease to be our Father, when we pass from this life.³⁸

Furthermore, those at the front who lived worldly lives were also capable of finer moments.

In some cases...men meet death who have given no outward sign in lifetime of religious life and many signs of drunkenness and fleshly sins, and yet manifest some nobler traits of character, recklessness in danger, thought for their pals and fearlessness of death. Probably the majority who fall in battle are young men with many fine qualities and some weaknesses, who have made no public declaration of faith in Christ.³⁹

Blamires explained these difficulties by asserting that for some people, human probation was not limited to this life. This did not apply to all; for those who had accepted or rejected the claims of Christ in this earthly life, death

brought eternal fixity of destiny. Moreover, Blamires inferred from his text that there would be some surprises at the Last Judgement; not everyone, for instance, who made a public declaration of faith in Christ translated that declaration into a worthily conducted life. Those, therefore, who had received more light had a proportionately greater responsibility.

The whole problem of the value and blessedness of the supreme self-sacrifice of the British soldiers demonstrated the theological confusion that was besetting the Methodist Church. To understand the significance of this emphasis, it is necessary to examine the modifications which evangelical theology had long been undergoing. The Methodist Church was established on the evangelicalism of a wave of revivals in England and elsewhere, starting from the early eighteenth century. John Wesley adopted a theological position blending Calvinism (stressing God's choice of man) and Arminianism (stressing man's choice of God).

Wesley appealed to both the Puritan sense of man's degenerate state, with its passionate plea for God's grace so essential to salvation, as well as to the Arminian insistence on personal responsibility, on free will and good works. 40

Thus Wesley fashioned a theology blending the process of conversion and the subsequent pursuit of holiness. This theology sought to explain and uphold what he was attempting to achieve in his societies: Christianity experienced in the lives of individuals. On the synthesis of experience, theology, and organisation, the unity and unanimity of Methodism was based.

The evangelical theology of salvation was not in dispute throughout the ferment of early nineteenth century Methodism;

but the conflict over authority within Methodism irreversibly weakened the influence of the organizational mechanism of Methodist experiential religion. "As part of a hierarchy of organisation and leadership the class was...affected by the kind of social tensions which erupted in the Wesleyan schisms...."⁴¹ Methodism became an increasingly hereditary group of people who were often rising in the social scale; these people required "...meetings which were less intensive and introspective - even, in the end, less specifically religious."⁴² The two problems combined to create an unwillingness to attend the class meetings and participate in what they were supposed to offer: the pursuit of perfect holiness.

Methodists objected...to being governed at all. They disliked being interrogated as to their behaviour and 'experience' and preferred not to give 'testimony' on such subjects.⁴³

This does not necessarily mean that Methodists had lost their zeal; rather, their zeal was being focused on different points. It is noteworthy that Currie records complaints of the monotony of the experiences related;⁴⁴ increasingly for Methodists, 'experience' seems to have meant 'the experience' - of conversion, that is. This seems to have been influenced by the impact of American revivalism; the writer is unaware of any research on this topic, but American revivalism seems to have been a factor which contributed to a major shift in Methodist experiential religion. For Wesley, the free agency of man had been important more in the pursuit of perfection than in the experience of conversion; American revivalism, propounding the theology of "decisions for Christ", redirected this free agency into the experience of conversion. Methodism thus abandoned Wesley's blend of

Calvinism and Arminianism (called "Evangelical Arminianism" by Semmel) for a more purely Arminian theology (which could perhaps be termed "Revivalist Arminianism"). The result of this was the tendency to believe that once the great decision had been made, there was nothing left to do to win salvation. So Wesley's insistence on the necessity of striving for perfection was abandoned. The new theology retained and perhaps increased Methodist evangelistic zeal; but the transformation of the convert into the saint (perhaps the most potent evangelistic method) was neglected. Without the concentration on this transformation, moreover, the class meeting slowly became irrelevant and eventually had to be abolished as the test of society membership. Rack summarises well the problem of the class meeting shorn of its purpose: the transformation of the convert into the saint.

Groups of this kind flourish best if their members share an intensity of - and continuing interest in - a common pattern of religious experience. Unless the "experience" is maintained, unless indeed it is progressive and becoming more sophisticated, boredom and loss of interest is always liable to set in. From this point of view it is not surprising that in the course of the nineteenth century the institution should have become jaded and unpopular. Yet this means, in part, that the class was the victim of a narrow view of religious experience and of inadequate leadership. Ideally, the skilful leader would have led his class on from dwelling on the moment of conversion to a more progressive view of the religious life; and from dwelling on a succession of "stereotyped" experiences to an application of Christian principles to a wider range of life and experience.⁴⁵

Under the impact of this major shift in Methodist experiential religion, the theology of coercion was bound to come under scrutiny. With free agency concentrated in the experience of conversion, it became increasingly necessary to make Christianity seem "attractive". Thus the 'hard'

elements of Wesleyan theology became increasingly unappealing, and the doctrine of hell was discarded. Moreover, this coincided with the rising respectability of Methodists; hell and holiness were a little too intense.

Denominational opinion became uneasy about the rigid doctrinal system Methodism had inherited, with its stark emphasis on hell and its severe notions of rewards and punishments. The denomination solved the problem this inheritance presented to its new respectability by abandoning the inheritance.⁴⁶

New views of God as a loving Father of all people, of Jesus as the great exemplar of humanity at its best, and of all men as brethren were well suited to this new spirit that emphasised happy community. Wesley might have believed that "holiness is happiness"; but whereas Wesley emphasised "holiness", late nineteenth century Methodists emphasised "happiness".

The impact of biblical criticism and the theory of evolution on the doctrine of the verbal inerrancy of the inspired Scriptures reinforced these trends. A tendency emerged to see religion and human history in terms of progress. Man had progressed upwards from the ape; the Bible contained a progressive revelation reaching the pinnacle of Truth in Jesus; human history was now progressing towards a golden age, which indeed seemed to early twentieth century Methodists to be very close.

New Zealand Methodism was affected by all of these trends. The Methodism that the immigrants of the second half of the nineteenth century brought to New Zealand was already being liberalised, and British Methodism remained a major influence on New Zealand Methodism right up to World War I. Therefore the Methodism that was increasingly being captured by liberal theology won acceptance in New Zealand as well as

in Britain. Of course, not everyone accepted the theological shifts; the fundamentalist controversy of the 1920's revealed this. But liberal theology gained its victory among the hierarchy of the Church, where the power and influence resided. Before World War I, the disunity was not significant. Methodists still thought of themselves as evangelicals, though "evangelicalism" meant different things to different people. For early twentieth century Methodists, however, divisions in theology seemed less important than unity in other areas. These Methodists found their unity in the hope of the near approach of the Golden Age; the optimism concerning the future possibilities awaiting the Church was tempered by concern over apparent Methodist failure to reach the masses,⁴⁷ but remained strong, as long as the Church fulfilled its mission of evangelisation and political moral reform. Nineteenth century liberal religiosity was at its height. "Traditional Christianity was dead."⁴⁸

By 1914, the old evangelical unanimity was dead, and had been replaced by theological confusion and untheological optimism. World War I rudely shattered this optimism, but left the theological scene as confused as before. The biblical criticism and liberal theology were questioned; J. Cocker often expressed a view that evangelical theology was being vindicated by the war. Indeed, he seemed to be right. The idea of sacrifice gained fresh prominence through the war as a result of the willing self-sacrifices of the British soldiers.

They, too, have gone the hard way of suffering and sacrifice for the sins of others. Is it altogether fanciful to suppose that, looking upon that symbol of Christ on the Cross, with their own hearts and limbs aching with the cruel strain of war, at least some of

them might be moved to read a fresh meaning in the familiar words, "He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was laid upon Him and by His stripes we are healed?" When the gains of the war that has cost so much come to be carefully summed up, not the least will be such a realisation as never before of the great fundamental truth of the Atonement, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission," and a more vivid apprehension than ever of the meaning of what John the Baptist meant when he stood and cried, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."⁴⁹

In fact, as with so many ideas that emerged as a result of the war, this emphasis did not last. The scale of horror of the war was so vast that new explanations were needed, and the doctrine of the just war no longer seemed to be valid. The development of a 'holy war' explanation, however, committed Methodists to a view of the war which did not match the reality of the war itself. Methodists could not see that they were in grave danger of equating the cause of God with the cause of Britain. This, of course, was not a new phenomenon; it was an imperialistic age. But views like A. T. Guttery's imperilled the spiritual independence of the Church.

A third inquirer asks, "How can I be militant and yet submissive and trustful? How can I step into the firing line to make history and yet rely on the overruling providence of God?" On one side religion bids me be receptive and passive; believe that all things will work together for good, and on the other side I am told to challenge fate, to wrestle with evil, and win a glorious destiny by valour and suffering. How shall I reconcile these imperatives? They must be reconciled or religion will be a chaos and my experience will swing between violent extremes. The soldier solves the problem; he trusts his leaders, does not worry about strategy and tactics, never doubts the issue, but he must make his contribution, his strong arm, quick step and clear eye are needed. He fights with a desperate courage, as if the issue rests on himself alone, while his trust in his leaders and his faith in his comrades are absolute. [.....] How can we reconcile the rush and heat of war with the gentle obedience of the flock in the field? It is a hard conundrum, but loyal faith find the answer.⁵⁰

Rev S.J. Serpell saw the problem early in the war; his retiring Presidential address in 1915 was unpopular because⁵¹ his colleagues could not see it. How could the State and the war leaders be checked? To place absolute trust in earthly leaders always tends to have evil consequences for the Church. The failure of the Church to grapple with this question was one of the most powerful factors in the creation of the absolute pacifist group, who in World War 2 applied the idea of the spiritual independence of the Church with the utmost rigour.

Furthermore, the admiration for the soldiers' self-sacrifice weakened the Methodist understanding of the uniqueness of Christ's sacrifice. The soldiers showed great courage, but for an earthly cause; Christ's sacrifice was for an unearthly cause on earth. The Methodist forefathers, whose spirituality was professedly so beloved of early twentieth century Methodists, would probably have rejected scornfully any contention that the two kinds of sacrifice could be validly compared. So the curious result of this emphasis on sacrifice was that while evangelical theology seemed to gain fresh prominence, Methodism moved still further from the old evangelicalism. Liberal theology was far from vanquished by World War I; on the contrary, its grip on the Church after the war was stronger than ever.

W.J. Williams' views usefully illustrate the tangles that even a leading clergyman could get into through espousing unrealistic views of the war. In fifteen months, he moved from rejection to acceptance of the spiritual value of the soldiers' self-sacrifice;⁵² in four years, he moved from consideration for the enemy to rabid anti-Germanism. His

'evangelical' theology was affected in the process, as shown in the first six months after the war. A returned soldier, Major W.E. Leadley, suggested that the Church was not appealing to the soldiers because it was not suggesting a view of Jesus which the soldiers could identify with; Leadley suggested that the soldiers would follow a Jesus who was described as 'their Greatest Friend, their Best Pal.'⁵ Williams thought that the article had much merit; but among other criticisms, Rev Harry Ranston delivered a stinging riposte to the tendency to create God in one's own image. Leadley's theology strongly tended away from the old evangelicalism; but in an atmosphere influenced by over four years of great concentration on the soldiers' heroism, the Methodist Church, deeply affected by a self-sacrifice that they themselves had never made in their own cause, lost confidence in the uniqueness of the evangelical message. The development of the social gospel after the war was the result; much was gained through this, but much that was important to Methodism was discarded too.

World War I was seen as the great test of the evangelical faith of Methodists; the heroic self-sacrifices of the British soldiers renewed interest in the Cross as the self-sacrifice of Christ, which seemed to vindicate the old evangelical faith against modern liberalising interpretations. However, the self-sacrifice of the British soldiers was viewed in such exalted terms that the uniqueness of Christ's self-sacrifice was not grasped; Christ was seen more as the greatest exemplar than as the unique redeemer. Thus the war reinforced the hold of liberal theology on Methodism, and Methodism moved further still from the

evangelicalism that it had discarded in the nineteenth century.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER 5

- 1 Professor Clow (denominational allegiance unknown), 'The Crucible of God', NZMT, 19/2/1916, p.3. Text: Malachi 3:3. Reprinted from British Weekly.
- 2 Pickett, H.J. (a British Primitive minister), 'When Peace Comes', NZMT, 26/5/1917, p.5.
- 3 'The Crucible of God', p.3.
- 4 Greenslade, W., 'The Cross as Love's Necessity' (address), NZMT, 23/6/1917, p.9. Text: Matthew 27:41. Greenslade's career: entered the ministry in 1900; Chairman of the District nine times; President-Elect in 1930, but incapacitated during the year by ill-health; became a Supernumerary in 1931.
- 5 'The War and Christianity: The Immediate Duty of Christian Men', NZMT, 22/1/1916, p.3. Reprinted from the Quiver.
- 6 'The Expeditionary Force' (editorial note), NZMT, 3/10/1914, p.8.
- 7 Entered the ministry in 1885; President in 1916; General Secretary of the Centenary Commemoration Movement 1921-2; Chairman of the District eight times; became a Supernumerary in 1931.
- 8 NZMT, 3/3/1917, p.12.
- 9 Entered the Bible Christian ministry in 1889; became a Supernumerary in 1927.
- 10 'New Zealand Expeditionary Forces' (correspondence), NZMT, 11/11/1916, p.12.
- 11 The Catholic divergence in conscript figures is highly significant, and probably to be explained by the likelihood that the patriotic commitment of Catholics to the British Imperial cause was much less enthusiastic than that of mainline Protestants. Furthermore, the religious identity of nominal Catholics bound them to a tradition whose allegiance to the State was much less secure than that of nominal Protestants, who made up the vast majority of Anglicans and Presbyterians, as Appendix V shows.
- 12 Retiring Presidential address, p.12.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 'Under Fire' (editorial note), NZMT, 24/7/1915, p.1.
- 15 'A Day to be Remembered' (editorial note), NZMT, 15/4/1916, p.1.
- 16 'Are we Worth Dying for?' (editorial), NZMT, 31/3/1917, p.8.
- 17 'The Cross as Love's Necessity', p.9. Text quoted: Hebrews 9:22.
- 18 'The Sacrificial Life: The Call of the Hour', NZMT, 17/2/1917, p.9. Texts quoted: Matthew 27:41; 16:25.
- 19 'The Cross as Love's Necessity', p.9.
- 20 Entered the ministry in 1880; Chairman of the

- District once; died in 1919.
- 21 'Life's Higher Value' (sermon), NZMT, 24/11/1917, p.9. Text: Acts 20:24.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 'The Sacrificial Life', p.9.
- 24 'Enlist in the King's Army' (sermon), NZMT, 22/1/1916, p.13. Text: John 10:9. Reprinted from the Standard.
- 25 'A New Year's Challenge: Sursum Corda' (editorial), NZMT, 9/1/1915, p.2. See also above, Ch.2, pp.59-60
- 26 'Both Sides Praying' (editorial note), NZMT, 1/5/1915, p.1. Text quoted: Luke 22:42.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 See: "Vesta", 'Prayers for the Germans', NZMT, 20/2/1915, p.6; "Aunt Kate", 'The Pulpit and the War', NZMT, 4/9/1915, p.9. Texts quoted: Matthew 5:44; 6:12; 1 Timothy 2:1-4.
- 29 'Preaching about Heaven' (editorial note), NZMT, 15/4/1916, p.2.
- 30 John 15:13.
- 31 'An Overworked Text', (editorial), NZMT, 18/9/1915, p.8.
- 32 Ibid. cf. H. Ford:
 Let us not forget in this connection our enemies of Germany and Austria are also dying in a belief that their cause is high and just. Their churches are full of bereaved and sorrowing beeseeking Jehovah, "Lord of All." Millions of mankind since time accrued have died patriotic deaths, many for a cause in their day equally as good as ours of this day, although on a smaller scale.
 ('The Way of Life' (correspondence), NZMT, 8/7/1916, p.12) Ford's career: home missionary 1914-17; entered the ministry in 1919; became a Supernumerary in 1948.
- 33 'An Overworked Text', p.8.
- 34 'Christmas and War' (editorial), NZMT, 23/12/1916, p.8.
- 35 'Life's Higher Value', p.9.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Entered the ministry in 1896; Chairman of the District six times; became a Supernumerary in 1930
- 38 'Larger Hope of the Life Beyond' (address), NZMT, 3/8/1918, p.9. Text: Matthew 7:21.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Semmel, B., The Methodist Revolution, London, Heinemann, 1974, pp.12-13.
- 41 Rack, H., "The Decline of the Class-Meeting and the Problem of Church-Membership in Nineteenth-Century Wesleyanism", PWHS, vol.39, pt.1, 1973, p.14.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Currie, R., Methodism Divided: A Study in the Sociology of Ecumenicalism, London, Faber and Faber, 1968, p.126.
- 44 Ibid., pp.126-7

- 45 Rack, p.13.
- 46 Currie, p.121.
- 47 On the Church's reaction to the statistics
given in the 1911 Census, see below, Ch.7, pp.194-5.
- 48 Currie, p.125
- 49 'The Cross in War' (editorial), NZMT,
26/10/1918, p.8. Texts quoted: Isaiah 53:5;
Hebrews 9:22; John 1:29.
- 50 'Some War Problems', NZMT, 10/7/1915, p.3.
cf. Rev J. Dukes' statement above, p.129.
- 51 See above, Ch.2, pp.63-5
- 52 See above, p.134
- 53 See above, Ch.3, pp.83-4
- 54 The Church and the Returned Soldier', NZMT,
18/1/1919, p.7. For details of the resulting
controversy, see below, Ch.8, pp.250-3

CHAPTER VI

THE PROBLEM OF COMPULSION

As the war progressed, Methodists became increasingly intransigent in their view of the war as a holy war, and they increasingly argued that no price was too great to pay in order to win the war. Thus when it became clear that New Zealand was not going to be able to raise the recruits that it needed by voluntary enlistments, conscription was seen as a necessity. This raised the problem of how to handle conscientious objectors. The Methodist Church's response to this problem was hesitant and divided, with official and unofficial attitudes at variance. But the Methodist Church lacked a significant body of Methodist conscientious objectors, unlike during World War 2; more important was how to reconcile the needs of the Empire, being met through compulsion, with the Church's need to retain its ministers in order to carry on its work.

1. Compulsory Military Training 1909-1914

The Defence Act of 1909 abolished the Volunteer Force, replacing it with a Territorial Force. Every male aged from 12 to 30 had to be registered and trained, in various groups according to age. Provisions were included

...whereby magistrates could impose penalties ranging from fines to disfranchisement upon non-compliance and upon ordinary citizens who prevented trainees from carrying out their duties in compliance with the law. ¹

The Defence Amendment Act of 1910 made minor alterations, and the compulsory registration of all boys aged from 14 to 20 began in April 1911.

Among the Churches, the major resistance to compulsory

military training was provided by two groups. The first was, of course, the Society of Friends. The second was a group of Baptists, led by Charles R. N. Mackie, a Christchurch lay preacher; he became Secretary of the National Peace Council soon after its formation in May 1911. Among the mainline demoninations most of those who were vigorously opposed to compulsory training were Methodists. Some leading clergyman were among those opposed, particularly Rev David McNicoll,² who was Treasurer of the National Peace Council while he was living in Christchurch.

Even before the original Defence Act was passed, there was criticism of it in Methodist circles. J. Boothroyd, a Primitive home missionary,³ criticised the European arms race as a negation of Christ's teachings and a potentially intolerable source of taxation.⁴ Noting that a wave of feeling in favour of compulsory training was passing over New Zealand, he posed three sets of questions regarding compulsory training's acceptability, criteria which constituted major Methodist objections to compulsory training. Firstly, Boothroyd questioned whether it was right to encourage 'this warlike feeling and preparation'. It was doubtful that it accorded with Christ's teachings, and that it would produce right thoughts and feelings in youth; moreover, the treatment of conscientious objectors was an unanswered question. Secondly, he questioned its necessity; New Zealand was wholly unlikely to be involved in a war affecting New Zealand itself, even with Germany. In any case, there was no need for two Christian nations to quarrel; no nation would dare to declare war without adequate cause, on pain of losing the goodwill of other civilised nations; and war between any

two great European nations would be a calamitous crime. Thirdly, Boothroyd believed that this training would not constitute an adequate defence against any attack on New Zealand. In conclusion, Boothroyd noted that any increased protection for New Zealand should consist of increased contributions to the British navy.

Methodist opposition to compulsory training, however, did not strengthen until 1911. Even before the registration, Rev Lewis Hudson, a strong anti-militarist, expressed concern at the possibility of the moral degradation of impressionable boys in military camps.⁵ The 1911 Methodist Conference upheld the right of the person of age, or otherwise his parent or guardian, to have conscientious objections respected.⁶ "Vigilans'" criticism of Lord Roberts for creating a war scare in England⁷ led to a correspondence controversy on the subject. But it was not until the 1912 Methodist Conference that Methodists began to examine fully the arguments for or against compulsory training.

Rev John W. Burton,⁸ one of the most vigorous anti-militarist Methodist ministers, moved:

That we ... hereby place on record our earnest desire for peace between nations, and the establishment of arbitration as the only rational and just method of settling international disputes and we hereby pledge ourselves to employ every legitimate means to advance the cause of the brotherhood of the human race, and the abolition of race hatred between civilised peoples; further, we view with alarm the growing tendencies towards militarism, as embodied in recent legislation, so contrary to the teaching and example of Jesus Christ, and we emphatically condemn the Compulsory Military Training Act of 1909, and pledge ourselves to work for its repeal.⁹

The motion made possible an 'animated' debate, revealing the truculence of some members. A lay representative, Colonel G.J. Smith, proposed as an amendment for the second clause:

While deploring the necessity of a defence force for the Dominion, we commend the present system of Universal Training to our people as the most equitable way of providing such a defence force.¹⁰

Smith contended that the underlying principle of the compulsory training system was that the men comprising New Zealand's military forces were prepared to fight if necessary, but hated war. Moreover, the military spirit was not being fostered because the men were being trained for defence, not aggression; the Defence Act's object was simply to defend New Zealand. Finally, arbitration would eventually solve international disputes, but the world was not yet ready to maintain peace by that method. To Rev Samuel Lawry's plea for the recognition of conscientious objectors, Rev John A.

¹¹
Luxford retorted that

The majority of the young men of the Dominion were in sympathy with the Act, and they would resent Mr. Burton's proposition, and be alienated from the Church by such objectors. As a rule, the objection was being made by a most undesirable element in the community.¹²

Mr G. Sheat agreed, claiming that carrying Burton's motion 'would bring the Church into disrepute.'

The amendment was lost by only one vote. In calm reflection afterwards, there was relief that the amendment had not been carried; the representatives of the Prince of Peace almost committed themselves to upholding something approaching militarism (whatever that was). But the vote on the amendment showed that the Conference was far from ready to endorse Burton's strongly anti-militarist views. Rev Thomas A Joughin¹³ solved the impasse by proposing, as a further amendment, the reaffirmation of the 1911 Conference's resolution upholding the rights of conscientious objectors.

"Vigilans" tried to uphold the wisdom of this compromise:

...[it] aims at securing an effective safeguard for liberty of conscience. [....] It may be said, indeed, that there is no exception to the confession of universal obligation to protect New Zealand against any foe who may emerge out of the possible into the actual. The want of agreement comes in in connection with what the authorities may think proper as a preparation for such a defence. In this connection, the domain of the individual conscience must be respected, and a provision to meet such genuine cases of objection on that ground as may here and there arise should not be beyond the possibilities of Statecraft.¹⁴

However, opponents of compulsory training found the Conference's avoidance of making a clear decision unsatisfactory. Mr R. Dalmer held that 'The system as contemplated in New Zealand is either a necessary or unnecessary thing, a justifiable or unjustifiable step.'¹⁵ The divisions continued unabated. McNicoll moved for the repeal of the Defence Act's compulsory clauses in the 1912 Canterbury District Synod; the motion was not voted on.¹⁶ Undaunted, McNicoll moved against the compulsory clauses at the first united Conference in 1913; the motion was defeated, to the applause of some members, till the President (Samuel Lawry) pointed out by implication that the Church might seem to be favouring the compulsory clauses.¹⁷ Joughin's compromise was again resorted to.

Why was the Methodist Church unable to move beyond respect for the consciences of individuals? Everyone deplored war, and sought to work towards arbitration as the only means of settling international disputes that would safeguard peace. But very few denied the possibility that any particular war could serve the cause of righteousness. Once this was admitted, it became merely a question of degree; at what point did the necessities of national defence

become aggressive militarism? In 1911, "Vigilans" criticised Lord Roberts for whipping up a war scare and advocating a system of compulsory training as the only way to repel any invasion force.¹⁸ A correspondent replied that "Vigilans" had praised Sir Edward Grey for seeking other ways to settle international disputes, though Grey accepted

"... the stern necessities of preparation for war forced upon England." Does it not look as if Lord Roberts and he are in the same boat, though they may differ about the number of oars it needs, and the best way to get them? Why should the one be praised for loftiness of mind, and the other blamed for bloodthirstiness?¹⁹

Another correspondent added further sting to the same point.

I presume "Vigilans" is not bold enough to proclaim the disbandment of all the British army and the cessation of all preparations for our country's defences, both naval and military. Such being the case, the question becomes one of degree merely, and Lord Roberts, by reason of his training,... is much more qualified to judge of the degree of preparation necessary to defend the British Empire, with its varied and vast responsibilities, than any person who has merely studied the matter from an ethical standpoint.²⁰

Almost all Methodists baulked at this point, even McNicoll, the active anti-militarist campaigner: 'Self-defence is a God-given instinct, and soldiers are probably as necessary as policemen.'²¹

Those who favoured compulsory training built their argument on an admission like McNicoll's.

We all hope war won't come. The owner of a building hopes it won't be burnt down. He insures it all the same. To be prepared for war is to make others think twice before attacking you. [...] We have a police force and pay a police rate to protect ourselves against thieves within the border, and why not insure against international depredations? "A strong man armed keepeth his goods in peace." The existence of clearly unrighteous wars is irrelevant to the question as to whether conditions exist where not only war is righteous, but where not to fight is unrighteous. New Zealand is endeavouring to set her house in order....²²

This was necessary while man's nature was sinful. A correspondent levelled some important problems stemming from the recognition of this fact at anti-militarists. The sinfulness of man meant that '... many men are great sinners, seeking only to devour the innocent. These men have to be reckoned with. Love ... makes no impression.'²³ Punishments were necessary in order to keep the peace and protect the persons and property of individuals within a society; in fact, every society needed some compulsion in order to function.

Every law compels the individual to do, or to refrain, for the benefit of the community. The more freedom we have by virtue of the law, then the more restraint we must place upon the individual, just as any higher privilege carries a correspondingly higher responsibility.²⁴

Furthermore, even an anti-militarist might find his person or property threatened, either by criminals or foreign enemies.

He would have but two alternatives. He cannot escape the position if war comes, and he cannot control the wills of unscrupulous men. War may come. Would he then stand idly by, and see his innocent people slain, or would he prefer to be prepared with a musket, and the knowledge of using it, in order that he might slay the offender. Either course is unpleasant; but he cannot help that. Whose blood would he rather be responsible for -that of the innocent by his passivity; or that of the guilty intruder by his purposed action? The first course would be a crime against morality; the second is his duty; and who so evades duty, inevitably incurs misery. While there are in the world men who will do violence, the innocent must either suffer it, or use violence to resist it. Where is the man who would not use force to prevent a bully molesting a child? What is national defence but the same thing on a larger scale?²⁵

This was a sound point, but it had the capacity to breed intolerance, with those asserting the rights of conscience being branded as irresponsible.

As to allowing any to evade training on account of conscientious scruples, I hold that he who on any pretence refuses to do his duty in the defence of his country, is unworthy of his country and the protection it affords him.²⁶

In reply to these contentions, anti-militarists expressed grave doubts that the Church should become involved in upholding the compulsory training system.

The appeal of the Church should always be to that which is brightest and noblest in the national life and conscience, and the war spirit falls a long way short of that. The recognition of the Universal Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man which the Church stands for, leaves no place for any propaganda but that which aims at the good of universal peace.²⁷

To be able to counter the arguments of those favouring compulsory training, however, anti-militarists had to attack the system more vigorously. Something similar to Mr S. S. Chapman's stand, in urging September Quarterly Meetings (which sent recommendations to Synod and thence to Conference) to declare themselves against compulsory training, was needed.

I have always understood that the Christian Church existed for the purpose of proclaiming and extending the teaching of Christ. Surely the Church has become materialised. A sense of God's presence has left the Church, and it is satisfied to lean upon an arm of flesh. There is no wonder that the Church is weak and impotent. God hath said, "He that honoureth Me, I will honour. He that despiseth I will lightly esteem." May we honour God by showing that we have faith in Him as our Defence.²⁸

This stand did not necessarily represent absolute pacifism. But a man like Charles Mackie, working from the rejection of the motto, "If you wish for peace, prepare for war", could potentially be driven to the absolute pacifist position.²⁹

Mackie's correspondence with Methodist bodies and individuals reveal the anti-compulsion contentions that he considered to be likely to impress Methodist minds. Thus to

the Secretary of the 1913 Conference, he asserted that

... this is a moral question, - one that must be dealt with from the basis of right versus wrong. It is unanimously agreed among Christians that war is wicked and against the teachings and example of Christ, consequently preparation for war must be wrong, and the Church will ultimately have to face this position. Shelving it will only add to the complications. [....] It does seem very lamentable that Organisations professing no adherence to the Christian faith should be advocating the deepest Christian principles whilst many of the Ministers of our land are openly expounding the cause of militarism.³⁰

Mackie pursued the idea of the compulsory training system as a moral issue more closely with regard to the provisions of the Defence Act. Firstly, he objected to the potential moral degradation of impressionable boys through training in how to kill:

... the very worst features of the system are that, at the most impressionable age, - from 12 to 21, - the child is taught the art of war and to look upon all peoples as possible enemies.³¹

This would increase the spirit of militarism in the community. Other kinds of moral degradation were possible too. Camp life was not generally congenial to the strengthening of moral character.³² Moreover, it would remove a child from the control of his parent or guardian, and provide a replacement of dubious value.

It takes hold of the child at the most impressionable age when the imagination is strongest and places it under the care of a military Officer who has neither aptitude nor inclination to teach it in the highest truths of humanity. The parent is the proper guardian of the child and if failure occurs here militarism will certainly never supply the want. [....] Discipline is good but true discipline can only be taught by love.³³

Secondly, Mackie believed that the system took away civil and religious liberties, especially of those who had

conscientious objections. As ³ Rev Matthew J. Evans pointed out, 'The imprisonment of lads amounts to persecution because the offence is civil and is not rightly punishable with other than loss of civil rights.³⁵' From this imprisonment, moreover, there was no right of appeal. This was seen as an alarming over reaction, which smacked of Prussian militarism; the system was often referred to as 'un-British'.

These views give some indication of the reasons for the division over this issue within the Methodist Church; very few people were prepared to adopt an absolute pacifist stance, claiming that all wars were unrighteous. This also explains why Methodists were quick to support a war that seemed righteous to them. The comment of one of Mackie's correspondents at least indicated the bitterness of the whole debate: '"If a man smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." No! you fool hit him on the other. That's modern Christianity.'³⁶

2. Conscription and Conscience 1916-1918

Compulsory military training might have split the Methodist Church down the middle; but compulsory military service, or conscription, came to be viewed as a regrettable necessity for meeting the exigencies of World War 1. As such, it focused attention on the issue of pacifism and on the rights of conscientious objectors. Hames claims that the Methodist Church was "... firmly behind the right of the conscientious objector to recognition as a human being."³⁷ The evidence does not fully support this; Methodism struggled with the whole question of compulsion throughout the war, and official resolutions again hid unofficial intolerance.

It soon became clear that voluntary enlistments would not supply the numbers needed for the war, and the forbidding spectre of conscription began to loom before New Zealand. The pressure of numbers led to altered viewpoints even in attempting to stave off conscription.

"Here am I, send me." It is with this quotation from Isaiah that the Premier closes his forcibly-expressed appeal for more men for the war. There was a time when such a use of words so sacred in their connection would in some quarters have provoked a protest. We have now reached a stage in our nation's history where the seeming incongruity disappears under the pressure of a stern necessity. When the very existence of a nation is at stake a response to the demand for military service may not unseemingly be regarded as an answer to the call of God.³⁸

But such pleas had little or no effect on the situation. Conscription increasingly seemed inevitable, and as its likelihood increased, the argument of voluntarism or compulsion re-emerged. Rev Moses Ayrton charged that conscription meant "Prussianism", and the introduction into the Empire of all the evils that the Empire was supposedly fighting. Furthermore, conscription might be acceptable for a State Church; but voluntarism was an absolutely vital principle for Methodism: 'Voluntaryism [sic] is one of the foundation stones of Methodism, and if removed the fabric must necessarily collapse.'³⁹ H. Ford based his rebuttal on the absolute necessity of victory: 'Prussianism and hate and anarchy of force must be abolished root and branch. Mr Ayrton will concede no price too much for this end to accrue, I've no doubt.'⁴⁰

Ford's argument for conscription now had a force for Methodists that the arguments for compulsory training had never had. The war had been accepted from the start as a righteous war; under the pressure of alleged evidence,

Methodists had come to view the war as a holy war; therefore no price was too great to pay for victory. Moreover, one of the most objectionable features of the compulsory training system, the drilling of impressionable boys, no longer applied. With more or less reluctance, Methodists accepted conscription. For W.J. Williams, conscription might be '...the extreme of that reaction from the principles of progressive civilisation which is a part of the heavy toll levied upon us by the present war.'⁴¹ But what option was there?

Compulsion to fight for freedom may sound as the absurdest of all paradoxes, but when freedom can be gained in no other way than by fighting for it what is there left for us to do? To be under the conscript flag is undoubtedly galling to our national pride, but if the alternative is to be under the German flag, what then?⁴²

...there is so much at stake in this war that every man who claims the rights of citizenship should be called upon in some way to recognise the responsibilities of citizenship by doing what he can to stave off such a calamity to civilisation as defeat at the hands of the unscrupulous Huns. With all our hatred of conscription there is something worthy of a deeper hatred still, and that is the prospect of seeing our own fair land ravaged and despoiled after the fashion of Belgium and France. That prospect ought to fire in itself every man of fighting age to place himself at the service of his country. But where the willingness to serve falls short of the required complement of fighters, even such a hateful alternative as conscription must be assented to in the interests of national welfare.⁴³

On one particular level, the necessity for conscription was a bitter blow for Methodists. They had willingly sent their sons, who had willingly volunteered, to Europe to fight and die in order to save the British Empire and Christian civilisation from the savage Hun. But because one class of people had not volunteered, New Zealand had been unable to meet the required quota of recruits. These men frequented the racecourses and the public bars, seemingly unconcerned

over the Empire's peril. Especially galling to Methodists was the Government's action in increasing the number of race days in New Zealand by thirty-one; Williams believed that had the facilities for racecourse gambling been removed, many men would have had nothing to do but to enlist, thus making conscription unnecessary.⁴⁴ The sight of these "shirkers" continuing to lead immoral lives as they had done before the war (on which Methodists had vented immense criticism) was loathsome to Methodists; moreover, the Methodist Church was experiencing, to its great vexation, much difficulty in securing any liquor law reform in the interests of wartime efficiency. Conscription, a bitter enough pill to swallow, was doubly hateful in view of these facts; thus in the increased level of social tension that these developments had caused, on top of the sacrifices most New Zealanders were making to prevent the Empire's conquest by a savagely unscrupulous enemy, it was unlikely that conscientious objectors would receive much toleration.

This factor shows that Methodists, whatever their misgivings about conscription, were unafraid of compulsion in principle. It must not be thought that liberalism stood only for individualism and voluntarism. Methodists had been campaigning for national prohibition for a long time, a proposal that reflected compulsory collectivism. When the first invalided soldiers returned to New Zealand, the issue of how to provide for them arose. Williams commented:

The voluntary principle is the most creditable to human nature, but it leaves room for the existence of the financial shirker, who is by no means unknown, even in this land of plenty. He saves his skin by allowing the other fellow to do the fighting, and he saves his sixpences by allowing the other fellow to do the giving. It is to reach shirkers of that type

that the Government should step in and tax every man according to his ability to make provision for the men who have risked life and limb to stave off the possibility of the German flag flying over New Zealand.⁴⁵

Some expressions of opposition to pacifism and conscientious objection lacked bitterness. The British Primitive biblical scholar, A.S. Peake, while upholding the exalted view of Britain's righteousness in waging a holy war (as described in Chapter 4), carefully recognised the pacifist position. He rejected this position, however:

A war like that in which we are engaged is international policemenhip on a colossal scale. There must be something wrong with the arguments of those who believe that we should have broken our word to Belgium and abandoned her to her fate rather than taken the sword in her defence. Our unsophisticated moral instincts surely tell us that we may bear for ourselves what we have no moral right tamely to see inflicted on others.⁴⁶

But such reasoning would not refute pacifists who based their objections to war on their interpretations of the Bible, and so it was important for supporters of the war to find their justification in the Bible too. Rev Paul W. Fairclough claimed that

The Bible...is one of the most military of books. In it [God] is the Lord of Hosts, the God of Battles, the one Supreme War Lord. In the Bible the partition between Religion and Patriotism is thin indeed. In fact, it is only an ever-ready spiritualising that turns Hebrew songs that were as purely patriotic as "Ye Mariners of England" into songs of the Upper Zion. "By the Waters of Babylon" is just as spiritual and no more, as "An Exile of Erin."⁴⁷

Moreover, Fairclough believed that Jesus' attitude did not conflict with war.

The Creator stamped upon universal nature two laws. The first was self-defence, and the second was the defence of mate and offspring. In these lie embedded the roots of all our chivalry and high feeling. [...] [Jesus] was essentially a fighter, and once even enforced his opinions with a scourge.⁴⁸

A particularly thorny biblical problem was the interpretation

of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). Fairclough commented:

It consists of hyperboles and rebounds from common personal defects; of counsels of perfection, and was not addressed to communities, but to you and me. You can turn the other cheek; but ...it must be your cheek. You must not turn your mother's cheek, or your sister's, to the smiter which you would do if you did not defend them.⁴⁹

Rev J.T. Pinfold noted that Jesus had never required any soldier to abandon his military duties on becoming a Christian and asserted that was necessary in man's present state of imperfection.

... "Whence come wars and whence come fightings among you?" [.....] ...wars have their root in jealousy, avarice and lust of power. Now Christianity recognises war as a fact. When Christ shall have cast out evil from men's hearts, when He shall have transformed lust for power to passion for service for the good of others, then we may look for the time when wars shall be no more. In the meantime the Church must strive to create an atmosphere in which the military spirit cannot live, but in which the Kingdom of the Prince of Peace shall grow and prevail.

But the lengthiest exposition of the biblical justification for war was made by Rev George P. Hunt,⁵¹ and based on Jesus' words, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I come not to send peace but a sword."⁵² Jesus was the greatest pacifist ever known, and at different times promised to and enjoined on his followers peace. He had come to reign as the Prince of Peace; he already did so in the hearts and lives of all who surrendered themselves to him. But he also intended that the world should have universal peace; he realised, however, that this had to be preceded by terrible conflict.

..."The ultimate purpose is peace, but an immediate purpose is conflict as the only road to peace; He is first King of righteousness and after that also King of Peace. But if his Kingdom be righteousness, purity, love, then unrighteousness, filthiness and

selfishness will fight against it with their lives. The ultimate purpose of Christ's coming is to transform the world into the likeness of Heaven; and all in the world which hates such likeness is embattled against Him.... Incessant struggle is the law for the individual and for society till Christ's purpose for both is realised."⁵³

Or, as Hunt summed up: 'His object is to produce peace; but owing to the wickedness of men and the sin that abounds, war is inevitable in order that true peace born of righteousness may come.'⁵⁴ Christians were to assume a militant attitude towards sin and evil, as Christianity naturally came into conflict with evil.

He came not to cast peace, but a sword. By war with sin and Satan, by what is to us a slow and painful process, He is subduing all things unto Himself, for He is already enthroned and "He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet." At the present time He is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, and He is working by His Spirit and through His people for the overthrow of all manner of evil; and not till the great conflict is ended by the complete overthrow of Satan's kingdom can there be absolutely perfect and universal peace on earth and goodwill toward all men; and not till then shall we be able to do without the sword.⁵⁵

Two texts particularly needed to be reconciled; both were sayings of Jesus on the night of his betrayal. "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword"⁵⁶ referred to the immediate situation when Jesus was arrested; an attempt to defend him at that point would assuredly fail. Besides, Jesus could call on angels to protect him; but it would serve no purpose, since his kingdom was not of this world, and the time had come for him to lay down his life meekly at his enemies' hands as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. "He that hath a purse, let him take it, likewise his scrip, and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garments and buy one"⁵⁷ was a warning to the disciples to prepare for the world ahead

of them; they would have to defend themselves, because there were wars and robbers in their path.

Hunt's arguments reflected Rev W. Scorgie's views, propounded a decade earlier, and were also open to the charge of being simplistic.⁵⁸ His interpretations of the two texts were debatable, especially the second text. A correspondent commented: '...Dr Maclaren does not sanction his exposition, and Dr Smith would reject it with scorn.'⁵⁹

There seems to have been little pacifism within Methodism during World War 1, judging from the level of pacifist literature from Methodists. This was likely to be low anyway, since New Zealand society's intolerance of minorities, especially the pacifist group, was marked during this war. But the writer does not know of any cases of Methodist conscientious objectors, though there may well have been a few; certainly there were no such cases that came to the official attention of the Methodist Church. Thus very few pacifist arguments, biblical or philosophical, were advanced. Christ's use of a bayonet was rejected; honouring Belgium as a reason for fighting was rejected because international relationships should not have been based on treaties resting ultimately on brute force; Christians were to reject pagan principles and pagan expediency.⁶⁰

Pacifist arguments were attacked. The correspondent who had rejected Hunt's views also rejected "Pacifists" views, particularly the claim that Christians of the first two centuries would be the people most likely to understand the mind of Christ; this ignored the Holy Spirit's availability and influence throughout Christian history. The correspondent noted the futility of an appeal to Jesus:

'...Neither Jesus nor the early Christians have solved for⁶¹ us, in advance, the problems of our modern social democracy.'

The conflicting views themselves possibly illustrated this.

An Anzac, according to "Pacifist," is a fighter for pagan principle. A Quaker, according to Mr Hunt, is a disloyal objector to his Master's chosen method. Can either of these be mutually exclusive views of the view of Jesus Himself? Would it not be like Jesus to approve both the conscientious soldier and the conscientious objector?⁶²

Such eirenic breadth was emphatically at a premium during World War I, however. W.J. Williams refused to print an 'indignant' criticism of his own publication of "Pacifist's" letter.⁶³ Mr T.W. Cameron charged that

Regarding the righteousness of our cause in this present conflict, it is just as sound in principle as is hanging for murder, or the infliction of any penalty to preserve the peace, etc. No one wants to be the hangman. But someone must do the work.⁶⁴

Using this comparison, he claimed that conscientious objectors were happy to let others undertake the role of hangman for their benefit, while they were unwilling to accept it themselves.

They will accept and enjoy all the privileges won and kept for them by the sword. They will put our legal machinery in motion in order to obtain their rights among men. They know that these privileges rest ultimately on the sword.⁶⁵ They use the privileges, yet won't raise the sword.

The righteous man could, in certain circumstances, take the sword justly; sinning dealt with the motive, not the action.

This war was

...the taking in hand of a vicious portion of the world's community in much the same manner as an individual community hunts down a band of robbers. There is nothing wrong about it. It's an unpleasant duty, exceedingly so. But as for conscientious⁶⁶ scruples, they can only be mean and contemptible.

Besides, all the good things that existed in modern society's institutions had been won by the sword, and could only be

protected in the same way. It was time to choose between unpleasant alternatives; the conscientious objector's position was irresponsible.

...unless ...he is ready, for conscience' sake, to renounce for all time all the privileges and protection that the sword has so far afforded him. He shall have no say in anything - no redress for any grievance. He shall be as an outcast, living as individuals choose to let him live, robbed and plundered, jeered at and tormented, turned out of his house; his church service, if he has one, interrupted by blasphemers - all this ad lib; or whatsoever may come at the will of the ever-present contemptibles ready to take advantage of the defenceless. And he shall not even defend himself.⁶⁷

Despite the potential intolerance, from which few Methodists were really free, Methodism's official attitude towards conscientious objectors was supportive, as long as the objectors were genuine. The original Military Service Bill contained no clause allowing for religious objection, which drew the ire of W.J. Williams, who argued for the exemption of Quakers, depending on their willingness to undertake non-combatant service (a formula which was being applied in other countries).⁶⁸ Williams also pointed out that there were genuine objectors who were not covered by the Legislative Council's amending clause,

"That he was on August 4, 1914, and has since continuously been a member of a religious body, the tenets and doctrines of which religious body declare the bearing of arms, and the performance of any military service to be contrary to Divine revelation...." ⁶⁹

However, in the intolerant atmosphere of the Parliament and of New Zealand generally at that time, no more than the Legislative Council's amendment was adopted, with some unedifying difficulty. Williams quoted Massey's view of the amending clause, with some trepidation:

..."Every objector could be compelled to go to the front. They could be compelled to dig trenches,

build barb-wire entanglements, or go into the Army Service Corps or Ambulance Corps." 70

For Williams, Massey's claim that "'the scruples of the strictly religious objector were respected'" was a mockery, since the religious objector would not take the military oath which preceded entry into either of these Corps.

Our Legislature by such an action has sown the seed of a crop of trouble that we shall not hear the last of for a long time to come. ...personally we have no sympathy whatever with the attitude of the religious objector, but we hold it to be a monstrous thing that in New Zealand he should be denied a right that is recognised in every other civilised country in the world. If what is now passed into law becomes operative we shall witness scenes in the police courts of this country that will be a disgrace to the age we live in. And the blame and shame of this will rest upon those of our lawmakers who have so far misread history as to fail to see that to disregard the rights of conscience is one of the costliest things that any country can do. 71

Methodist attitudes to conscientious objectors generally were best summarised by A.T. Guttery. There was a strong feeling against them.

Most of us do not agree with the conscientious objector. We cannot understand his distortion of Christian ethics and his refusal of the imperative need of sacrifice. We resent his claims to moral superiority and are thankful that his numbers are few. If he became a great host Britain would be in peril of her life, and civilisation would lie in ruins before the rage of Prussian brutality. We feel a little contempt that he should be willing to keep his skin whole at the expense of valiant men who bleed and die for him, and our admiration goes out to the splendid youths who have had conscience enough to see that the honour of a continent, the sanctity of nationalism, and the free mission of Britain are worth more than life. We are indignant when the objector refuses non-combatant service and tells us that he would not resist the scoundrel who would insult his wife and outrage his sister. The objector must not expect an easy time when he doubts the morality of a nation fighting for its life. He can only prove his fidelity to conscience by paying the price, and the more he whines the more we doubt his sincerity. [.....] See to it that shirkers and slackers find here no excuse for infidelity against society, and let no section of the community make conscience a cry for professional exemption. 72

Despite this, waiting longer for victory was better than shooting anyone '...who truly believes that the word of Jesus forbids him to take up arms.'⁷³ Conscription was particularly hateful because it seemed to represent the triumph of militaristic groups over 'public freedom'.

It is intolerable that the few safeguards left to us should be filched away by men who flout the intentions of Parliament while they profess the loudest loyalty to King and country. We ask no favours for the conscientious objector, but we do demand that he shall be treated in harmony with British law and tradition.⁷⁴

The Church had a duty to protect conscientious objectors, for otherwise the ideals for which Britain was fighting would be undermined.

We dare not shame these high ideals and blaspheme our holiest faith by descending to the muddy roads of persecution. Better miss a few recruits than wound a soul. Better trust the freedom of our people than perpetuate the worst traditions of a militarism that we hate abroad and must not allow to run riot at home. Tell the conscientious objector that Britain needs his service in one form or other, but refuse to give him the distinction of a spurious martyrdom.⁷⁵

Sentiments like Guttery's were ignored by the New Zealand military and political authorities, and Williams' worst fears were realised and perhaps exceeded. The case of the fourteen objectors sent to England was laid before the Christchurch Ministers' Association at a special meeting on September 3, 1917, and the Association unanimously voted to protest to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defence. Williams drew attention to this in the next issue of the Methodist Times,⁷⁶ and published an appeal to the Churches in the same issue detailing the treatment these men received. In this appeal, Leonard M. Isitt, M.H.R.,⁷⁷ expressed his opinion that protests in Parliament were of little use unless strong protests, particularly from the Churches, were made

outside Parliament.⁷⁸

The treatment of this information, however, amounted to rather less than widespread vigour. The information came at a time when the movement to close hotel bars at 6 p.m. was reaching its culmination in the passing of legislation to secure that end,⁷⁹ and the District Synods held two months later confirm this concentration. All Synods passed resolutions, often numerous and lengthy, on the temperance issue, but only two passed resolutions of protest against the treatment of the conscientious objectors.⁸⁰ The 1918 Conference's treatment of the matter revealed the intolerance that lay just beneath the surface of official Methodism. No sooner had Rev Frederick W. Boys moved "⁸¹That, in view of the report concerning the treatment of the men who have been deported, the Conference calls upon the Government to appoint a Commission of Inquiry"⁸² than criticism was vented. The Conference eventually went into Committee, and contented itself with repeating part of the first resolution of the Christchurch Ministers' Association, with some added qualifications.⁸³ In view of the fact that the Conference very hotly objected to the assault by a Catholic mob on the Methodist and Presbyterian ministers of Feilding after they had appeared on the platform with Howard Elliott (National Lecturer of the Protestant Political Association),⁸⁴ their reaction to the treatment of the conscientious objectors was very muted, as a commentator realised:

We have no sympathy with the shirker. A man who will not do all he can to help his country in this time of storm and stress ought to be made to feel his position very severely. But we maintain that due consideration should be given to the religious objector. We cannot see things from his viewpoint, but he tells us that his religious convictions will not allow him to fight. We must respect the

convictions of such a man. [....] We wish the Conference had made a clear, definite declaration upon the subject of the treatment of such men. The Conference was enthusiastic in its defence of free speech. It might have said more concerning the rights of conscience.⁸⁵

Methodists were deeply divided on the treatment of conscientious objectors, and Hames' contention that the Methodist Church stood firmly behind the conscientious objector's right to a recognition of his humanity is thus false.

3. Ministers and Military Service

The stand of the post-Constantinian Catholic Church, endorsed by the Reformation Churches and the Methodist Church, and followed with infrequent exceptions, was that while Christians were allowed to fight, clergymen were not allowed to bear arms. Such was the enthusiastic patriotism displayed for World War I, however, that these historic formulations were swiftly disregarded. Rev J.R. Sullivan, a probationer at the time, volunteered for the front line very soon after the outbreak of war, in response to the number of young men from his Bible class in Timaru who had volunteered. In the end, the Methodist Church sent a very high proportion of its ministers, probationers, students and home missionaries to the war; the 1917 Conference noted that fifty-two ministers, or twenty-six per cent of those of its staff who were eligible, had enlisted or responded to the ballot without appeal.⁸⁶ Not only was the youth work decimated by the enlistment of so many young men, but the whole work of the Church was seriously affected by the loss of such a high proportion of its paid agents. Moreover, the enlistment of the Church's young men robbed the ministry of its recruiting

ground for many years. Various expedients were resorted to in order to fill the gaps; some supernumerary ministers and local preachers took on supply work, and other local preachers fulfilled many more preaching engagements. Thus when Rev Harry Ranston raised the question of whether the Methodist Church could spare any further agents for the war through the conscription ballots,⁸⁷ an issue of major importance for the Church's future was being highlighted.

Ranston made five points. Firstly, married ministers were not called to leave their churches till all the single or recently married men had gone. Secondly, other denominations were successfully pleading that they could not spare their agents, and a poorly staffed Methodist circuit did badly alongside well-staffed parishes of other denominations. Thirdly, the ministers still in New Zealand, in their ordinary pulpit and pastoral work, were doing real war work among those left behind by the soldiers. Fourthly, some ministers had conscientious objections to ministers bearing arms; Ranston thought that ministers could not reasonably object to Red Cross service, and that the Church should act to ensure that they were posted to that work. Fifthly, on a private's pay, their families' financial position would be difficult.

Late in 1916, the President (Rev Albert C. Lawry) met the Auckland ministers, plus a number of representative laymen, to decide on the Church's action regarding ministers conscripted into the forces. The meeting decided not to appeal against any minister or home missionary called up until the Church could not release any more agents. However, the 1917 Conference was to determine how many ministers could

be spared, and what circuit readjustments were thus required. In the meantime, the President was to decide who could be spared, and was to advise the respective District Chairmen to appeal where it was necessary.⁸⁸ Finally, if any conscripted ministers desired exemption from combatant service, while willing to perform non-combatant duties, the Church was to certify their conscientious status and appeal accordingly.⁸⁹

When these recommendations were brought before the 1917 Conference, a 'prolonged and animated debate' in committee ensued, after which the recommendations were 'adopted by a very considerable majority'.⁹⁰ The Conference decided that "the irreducible minimum" had been reached, and that the President should appeal on behalf of any paid agent of the Church drawn in the ballot.⁹¹ Many of the clergy and (one suspects) the majority of the laity were not pleased. Even W.J. Williams dissented. Though not wanting to send to the war any minister who thought that he should not go, he felt that there should be no barriers placed against any minister who felt called to enlist. He concluded:

[I dissent] most emphatically from the implication sometimes indulged in that the motives of the man who conscientiously goes forth to take his part in this war are less noble and less worthy than are those of the man who stays at home, and devotes himself to the ordinary round of ministerial duty.⁹²

Lay views of the issue revealed bitterness. "Methodist Soldier's Sister" assessed the meaning of the Conference's decision thus:

..."Let who will make sacrifices on our behalf. We admire their heroism; but our Church-not, mark you, the cause of God and righteousness, but the Methodist Church-needs all her ministers at home, therefore at home they must remain." ⁹³

Another correspondent replied to Ranston's original letter in abusive terms, accusing him of selfishness and cowardice, and

claiming that since very many Christian laymen and office-holders could not and did not advance such objections as a reason for not fighting, ministers should not do so either.⁹⁴ It is likely that such feelings were widespread among the laity.

By this stage, tensions over the issue had been exacerbated by the virulent anti-Catholicism that was beginning to assert itself in New Zealand society. The Roman Catholic Church had applied for exemption from conscription for its priests and Marist Brothers (a teaching order for Catholic schools). This deeply angered Methodists. It was bad enough that a man-made canon law should be invoked in order to secure exemption for priests;⁹⁵ it was reprehensible and intolerable that exemption should be sought for the Marist Brothers on the ground that the Catholic Schools would suffer without them. State school teachers never invoked or received such a privilege.⁹⁶ The defeat of a bill providing for the Marist Brothers' exemption by the Legislative Council gave Methodists great satisfaction.⁹⁷

Such an atmosphere ensured that the question of whether more ministers should go to the war when drawn in ballots was not finally resolved by the 1917 Conference's resolution. Probationers who stayed in New Zealand experienced great difficulty; two of them received special notice:

...we commend Bros. Sage and Kendon for their loyalty to the Conference in relation to military matters and extend our sympathy to them in the very trying position in which they have been placed during the past year.⁹⁸

The probationers were in an invidious position. On top of the church law requiring them to be single, and the difficulty of getting sufficient assistance from senior

ministers,⁹⁹ they suffered much hardship through the high feeling and intolerance of wartime New Zealand society. The 1918 Conference therefore resolved to release any unmarried minister desiring to enlist, except in urgent cases.¹⁰⁰

The problem of compulsion and conscience had vexed Methodists before World War I; the Church was evenly divided over the merits of compulsory military training, though firmly behind the rights of conscientious objectors. Conscription was much more definitely upheld by Methodism when it was introduced in 1916, but Methodism's attitude to conscientious objectors suffered as the exalted view of Britain's righteousness in waging a holy war combined with emerging social tensions in New Zealand to produce an atmosphere of severe intolerance towards dissenting minorities. Behind comparatively muted official support for the rights of objectors lay much unofficial disagreement and intolerance. Some of these attitudes also emerged on the question of whether ministers could and should be released to go to the war when called up in the conscription ballots. The 1917 Conference resolved that the Church could spare no more agents, but this stand created problems and encountered some opposition.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER 6

- 1 Weitzel, R.L., "Pacifists and Anti-militarists in New Zealand, 1909-1914", NZJH, vol.7, no.2, October 1973, p.128.
- 2 Entered the ministry in 1868; President in 1894; Chairman of the District twice; became a Supernumerary in 1909.
- 3 Served mostly as a home missionary throughout a lengthy career in a number of short spells.
- 4 For the following argument, see 'Compulsory Military Training', NZPM, 1/11/1909, p.240.
- 5 'Compulsory Military Training' (editorial note), NZMT, 14/1/1911, p.9.
- 6 MCNZ, 1911, p.89. The feeling about the militarism seemingly existing among the general public was sufficient for the 1911 Primitive Conference to discuss the possible militaristic inclinations of the Boy Scout movement! (NZPM, 1/2/1911, pp.42,47).
- 7 See below, p.153.
- 8 Entered the ministry in 1897; transferred to the Victoria and Tasmania Conference in 1914 for foreign mission work; eventually rose to become President-General of the Australian Methodist Church.
- 9 NZMT, 23/3/1912, p.7. A third clause caused no disagreement and was passed.
- 10 Ibid
- 11 Entered the ministry in 1876; President in 1903; Chairman of the District twice; Principal Methodist Chaplain in World War I; severely wounded at Gallipoli - one leg later amputated; became a Supernumerary in 1916, but continued chaplaincy work among New Zealand patients at the Walton-on-Thames hospital till the end of the war; became Senior Chaplain in the N.Z.E.F. in July 1916. See F. Glen, "John A Luxford, C.M.G., C.F.", PWHS(NZ), vol.23, no.3, September 1966, pp.17-18.
- 12 NZMT, 23/3/1912, p.7.
- 13 Entered the ministry in 1887; President in 1918; Chairman of the District six times; became a Supernumerary in 1922.
- 14 NZMT, 6/4/1912, p.4.
- 15 'Compulsory Military Training' (correspondence), NZMT, 6/4/1912, p.8.
- 16 Minutes, Canterbury Methodist District Synod, 1912, p.655.
- 17 NZPM, 1/3/1913, p.358.
- 18 NZMT, 6/5/1911, p.6.
- 19 "Justice", 'Lord Roberts' Character', NZMT, 20/5/1911, p.4.
- 20 "Amor Patriae", 'Lord Roberts' Character', NZMT, 20/5/1911, p.4.
- 21 'Compulsory Military Training' (correspondence), NZMT, 24/8/1912, p.12.
- 22 Ford, H., 'Compulsory Military Training'

- (correspondence), NZMT, 5/10/1912, p.13.
- 23 Cameron, T.W., 'Anti-Militarism', NZMT, 9/8/1913, p.15. Text quoted: Luke 11:21.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 "Patriot", 'Compulsory Military Training' (correspondence), NZMT, 2/11/1912, p.7.
- 27 "Vigilans", NZMT, 3/6/1911, p.2.
- 28 'Compulsory Military Training' (correspondence), NZMT, 24/8/1912, p.12. Text quoted: 1 Samuel 2:30.
- 29 In fact, if Mackie had not already reached this point before World War 1, the outbreak of that war seems to have driven him into opposition to all war. Mackie viewed the war as the kind of war that he had always feared and struggled to prevent.
- 30 CMP, 4/2/1913, p.1.
- 31 To Oamaru Ministers' Association, CMP, 24/6/1912, p.1.
- 32 Mackie reminded the North Canterbury District Synod that the original Defence Bill has provided for wet canteens in the camps (CMP, 20/11/1913, p.1).
- 33 To Mr Pinfold (possibly Rev J.T. Pinfold), CMP, 28/9/1912, p.1.
- 34 Entered the ministry in 1912; transferred to the New South Wales Conference in 1917 for foreign mission work; died in Fiji in 1920.
- 35 To Mackie, CMP, 27/8/1912, p.1.
- 36 Gubb, B.M. (a Unitarian), CMP, 31/3/1913, p.2. Text quoted: Matthew 5:39.
- 37 Coming of Age, p.24.
- 38 'The Call for Men' (editorial note), NZMT, 30/10/1915, p.1. Text quoted: Isaiah 6:8.
- 39 'The Call of the War' (correspondence), NZMT, 18/9/1915, p.14.
- 40 'The Call of War' (correspondence), NZMT, 13/11/1915, p.12. Note that Ford had been an advocate of compulsory training before the war (see above, pp.153-4).
- 41 'Under the Conscript Flag' (editorial), NZMT, 2/9/1916, p.8.
- 42 Ibid
- 43 'The Compulsory Service Bill' (editorial note), NZMT, 24/6/1916, p.1.
- 44 'Conscription in Effect' (editorial note), NZMT, 25/11/1916, p.2.
- 45 'The Duty that Remains' (editorial note), NZMT, 13/11/1915, p.1.
- 46 'The Pacifists and the War', NZMT, 10/6/1916, p.12.
- 47 'God and War' (address), NZMT, 27/11/1915, p.9. Text: Psalms 46:7.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 Ibid; emphasis original.
- 50 'Benefits of War', NZMT, 24/6/1916, p.4. Text quoted: James 4:1. Note the similarity to Rev W. Scorgie's view that war redresses the imbalances which sin creates in the world

- (see above, Ch.2, p.47).
- 51 Entered the Primitive ministry in 1900; became a Supernumerary in 1940.
- 52 Matthew 10:34. For the following argument, see 'Not Peace but a Sword: The Method of Jesus Christ', NZMT, 19/8/1916, p.9.
- 53 Ibid.; quotation from a leading British preacher, Dr A. Maclaren.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Ibid. Text quoted: 1 Corinthians 15:25.
- 56 Matthew 26:52.
- 57 Luke 22:36
- 58 See above, Ch.2, p.47.
- 59 "Inner Light", 'The Conscientious Soldier and the Conscientious Objector', NZMT, 14/10/1916, p.14.
- 60 See "Pacifist", 'Pacifists and the War' (correspondence), NZMT, 8/7/1916, p.12. The correspondent seems to have been one of a group of 'younger ministers' who were pacifists; the writer has been unable to identify any of them, except for W.T. Hooper (who corresponded with Mackie; CMP, 4/6/1915, 21/7/1915) and Moses Ayrton. Ayrton illustrates the confusion over the whole question. His letters to the Methodist Times during the war seem to indicate a pro-war, anti-conscription stance. But Ayrton corresponded with Mackie during the war, as before it, asking for peace pamphlets; his letter betrays no hint that his attitude to the war was anything other than opposition (CMP, 2/11/1915). Furthermore, in a letter penned at the conclusion of the war, Ayrton counted himself among those '...who regard the League [of Nations] as not being sufficiently effective in dealing with the universal faith in force.' ('A Plea to the Churches by a Pacifist', NZMT, 21/12/1918, p.4) Hooper's career: home missionary 1904-31. Ayrton's career: home missionary 1910-18; entered the ministry in 1924; became a Supernumerary in 1948.
- 61 'The Conscientious Soldier and the Conscientious Objector', p.14.
- 62 Ibid
- 63 'Troubled by "Pacifist"' (editorial note), NZMT, 5/8/1916, p.1.
- 64 'Conscientious Objection' (correspondence), NZMT, 29/4/1916, p.5.
- 65 Ibid.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 Ibid.
- 68 'The Religious Objector' (editorial note), NZMT, 24/6/1916, p.1.
- 69 'Easing the Blot' (editorial note), NZMT, 8/7/1916, p.1.
- 70 'An Indelible Blot' (editorial note), NZMT, 5/8/1916, p.1.
- 71 Ibid.

- 72 'The Conscientious Objector', NZMT,
16/9/1916, p.5.
- 73 Ibid
- 74 Ibid
- 75 Ibid
- 76 'Conscientious Objectors' (editorial note),
NZMT, 15/9/1917, p.2.
- 77 Entered the ministry in 1879; in 1893, became
the first minister to be released for one
year in order to undertake full-time
agitation in the prohibitionist cause;
resigned from the ministry in 1908; entered
Parliament in 1911; Vice-President in 1922;
died in 1937.
- 78 Irvine, M.C. (President, Freedom League), 'An
Appeal to the Church' (correspondence), NZMT,
15/9/1917, p.13.
- 79 See below, Ch.9, p.297.
- 80 Minutes, Auckland District Synod, 1917,
p.313; Minutes, Taranaki-Wanganui District
Synod, 1917, p.535. The latter Synod's
resolution affirmed that of the former Synod.
- 81 Entered the Primitive ministry in 1891;
became a temporary Supernumerary in 1919;
resigned from the ministry in 1923.
- 82 NZMT, 16/3/1918, p.5.
- 83 Christchurch Ministers' Association's first
resolution:
That the Christchurch Ministers'
Association having heard details of the
sufferings of conscientious objectors
urges on the Government that all
conscientious objectors should be
offered absolutely non-military service
of a type useful to the State and at
military rates of pay. The Association
believes that such a settlement would
relieve the very grave difficulties that
have emerged in administering the
Military Service Act.
(H.A. Job (Secretary, Christchurch Ministers'
Association) to Mackie, CMP, 3/9/1917, p.1.)
cf. the 1918 Conference's resolution:
That having heard details of the
sufferings of conscientious objectors to
military service, the Conference urges
on the Government that all conscientious
objectors, of whose bona fides they are
satisfied, should be offered absolutely
non-military service of a type useful to
the State, and at the military rate of
pay to a private.
(MCNZ, 1918, p.57; emphasis added to show the
qualifications)
- 84 The Methodist minister was Rev George F.
Stockwell. Career: entered the ministry in
1904; Chairman of the District twice; became
a Supernumerary in 1942.
- 85 "The Onlooker", NZMT, 30/3/1918, p.13.
- 86 MCNZ, 1917, p.109.

- 87 For the following argument, see 'Ministers
and Military Service' (correspondence), NZMT,
6/1/1917, pp.14-15.
- 88 'Clergy and Service: Methodist Attitude:
Question of Appeals', NZMT, 6/1/1917, p.2.
- 89 Paris, P.R. 'Ministers and Military Service'
(correspondence), NZMT, 3/2/1917, p.3. This
resolution had been deleted from the printed
report of the meeting.
- 90 NZMT, 17/3/1917, p.6.
- 91 'Clergy and the War' (editorial note), NZMT,
17/3/1917, p.1.
- 92 Ibid.
- 93 'Ministers and Military Service'
(correspondence), NZMT, 26/5/1917, p.12.
- 94 Collins, R.C., 'Ministers and Military
Service', NZMT, 20/1/1917, pp4-5.
- 95 See: Romanist Exemptions' (editorial note),
NZMT, 17/2/1917, p.1; 'Ought Parsons to
Fight?' (editorial note), NZMT, 3/3/1917, pp
1-2; "Father of Three Volunteers", 'Religious
Objectors' (correspondence), NZMT, 17/3/1917,
p.16.
- 96 'The Marist Brothers' (editorial note), NZMT,
23/4/1917, p.1.
- 97 'Well Beaten' (editorial note), NZMT,
10/11/1917, pp.1-2.
- 98 Minutes, South Auckland District Synod, 1917,
p.122. It is interesting to note that one of
these men, Rev Ernest E. Sage (the writer's
grandfather), was later a Christian
Pacifist. However, the writer has had the
opportunity of a brief examination of Sage's
papers, which reveal that his views on the
war were no different from the norm at this
stage. The problems which he experienced
would thus have been related to his ministry,
as a young unmarried man, in a small town
(Taumarunui) at this particular stage of the
war. Sage's career: entered the ministry in
1916; became a Supernumerary in 1955. Rev
Charles H. Kendon's career: entered the
ministry in 1916; became a Supernumerary in
1954.
- 99 See above, Ch.1, pp.35-6.
- 100 MCNZ, 1918, p.96

PART II • THE CHURCH AND THE NEW AGE

CHAPTER VII

THE NEW AGE

The outbreak of a European war did not spell the complete destruction of the world in which the Church operated. However, the scale of World War I inevitably affected a Church which was not utterly certain of the nature of its mission to the world. The opinion that the war constituted the end of one age and the beginning of a much better age was gradually articulated. Naturally, the new age was seen as the epoch in which the ideals for which Britain was fighting would gain the ascendant; this happy result would allow the world to make considerable progress towards the Golden Age. Methodists attempted to re-assess their work in the light of such considerations; a new age meant a great opportunity for, and challenge to, the Church to advance the cause of Christianity. This chapter will examine the characteristics of the new age as predicted by Methodists, and the factors that influenced the formation of this belief.

1. A New World

Such was the scale of this modern European war that the whole social order seemed to be in upheaval, a perception which was indeed accurate. Moreover, the unprecedented horrors of the actual fighting tended to lead to grave doubts that the human race was living in a moral universe which balanced good and evil in the long run. These problems very quickly created a genre of wartime religious writing which sought to demonstrate the ways in which the war was benefitting both Britain and mankind. The upheaval and horror of the war was such that Methodists found it necessary

to look for social and religious developments which would offset the evil that had seemingly been unleashed on the world: 'If that cost is to be justified it is clear that the benefit must be very substantial.'¹

From the start, two developments resulting from the war were noted approvingly: the newly found unity of the British Empire, and the removal of party dissensions in the face of a common enemy; and the willing sacrifice of men and money by so many people in the patriotic cause. As the war progressed, this unity and willingness to make sacrifices led to other developments which excited the admiration of Methodists. The willing switch by British women from suffragist militancy to industrial service gained particular approbation. J Cocker admired the way in which

Genteel women of the English upper classes have thrown aside their fashionable and idle mode of living, and have become nurses in hospitals or workers in munition factories. Others have become railway porters, tram conductors, farm labourers and bank clerks.²

These levelling social tendencies were also apparent in other developments. There was general praise for the Government's increased intervention in the economy in order to prosecute the war successfully. This 'socialization of national wealth and industries'³ was particularly welcome in view of the social injustices that had prevailed before the war.

Up till recently the Manchester doctrine of governmental inaction - an unwarranted extension of Free-trade principles - meant the leaving of many wrongs unrighted. This doctrine of laissez faire - let alone, hands off - blocked the path to State interference with entrenched and arrogant privilege. It riveted manacles upon the toiler's hands and heart. The "Manchester School" fostered an apotheosis of self. It taught us to be mercenary. It shut out heaven with the smoke of our cotton factories and drowned the whisper of God in the whirr of our looms and the clang of our steam-hammers.⁴

The social problems that such attitudes created could not be removed merely by partial and temporary governmental intervention in the economy for a limited purpose. But where the introduction of a 'semi-socialistic order' could not level, or even reduce, the barriers between classes, the mutual sympathy which was created by the strains of a common sacrifice and anxiety was believed to be replacing class divisions with national unity. Chappell boldly declared that 'The apocalypse of hate - for the war is that - is bringing the reign of love. Threatening to sever, it is unifying.'⁵ Moreover, the class barriers were being removed most directly in the army itself, with great benefits in store for the nation.

The British Army has been democratised. We have seen the same thing here. [....] When this kind of thing can happen without exciting much comment, a great social result has been achieved. We have gone a long day's march on the road of enlightened democracy. That which might seem destined to tear man asunder is, in God's good hand, uniting.⁶

Allied to the strengthening of democratic influences within the British nation was the development of international fraternity within, and through the bond between, the Entente Powers. Methodists could extol not only the demonstration of unity within the British Empire, but the emergence of unity among the English-speaking peoples of the world as the United States entered the war on the Allied side. Moreover, the unity of the Entente Powers, which were most diverse and often at variance before the war, pointed the way to wider international friendship after the war.

Such an alliance points the way to universal treaties. While for a little this league must be one of defence against a common foe, and put a protecting wall around a group of peoples abhorring German frightfulness, yet it has in its unique

comprehensiveness a pledge of a bond that may one day - "the day," God's day - include all the kingdoms of the earth.⁷

In this context, the optimism of Rev J.T. Pinfold, quoting Rev W.L. Watkinson (a leading British Methodist preacher), becomes understandable.

..."Let us hope that war itself is committing suicide and coming back no more." This is the benefit we most desire to possess. And it is coming. Men shall beat their swords into plough-shares and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. When this millennium dawns, then shall man's universal brotherhood be acknowledged everywhere, and the Prince of Peace shall reign in every heart of man.⁸

Besides social and international gains, Methodists discovered moral and religious benefits consequent upon the war. The war created a need for national efficiency in all facets of human life that furnished an additional argument in the Methodist Church's war on the liquor traffic; this plea was largely responsible for the passing of legislation in 1917 securing the closing of hotel bars at 6 p.m.⁹ Even more importantly, it was believed that the war would deepen the religiosity of the nations and extend the influence of the Kingdom of God. Methodists believed that the Kingdom of God was 'coming', though this did not necessarily mean the final 'coming' at the end of the world.

But the brighter side of the war cloud is most vividly apprehended in the belief that God will overrule this war for the more striking assertion of His own claim, and the more rapid extension of His own kingdom. It has happened aforetime that gigantic evils that have blighted the lives of nations could only be uprooted by the storm that burst from the cloud of war. It seems no vast speculation to conclude that results of a similar kind may follow from the present war. In the violent shaking of the world to-day the pre-eminence of moral above material values is being demonstrated as never before. In letters of blood and fire the great truth is being written, so that all may read that "Righteousness exalteth a nation, and sin is a reproach to any

people." In the midst of the discipline of suffering which this war involves, there is no small comfort in the assurance that the Lord reigneth.¹⁰

Emboldened by this confidence, it only required a suitable response from Methodists for the benefits of the war to become permanent, enabling humanity to continue its progress towards a golden age, and leading to the extension (if not the final consummation) of the Kingdom of God on earth.

This clarion call of St Paul's may be confidently echoed, and even this ghastly war be found among the "all things" of beneficent possibility. To the man who has had no eye but for the carnage I would pass that call on. [....]

Shall these things be? They shall, if we "Love God," if we fulfil the condition St Paul himself uses. Our heedful, prayerful spirit can assure them.¹¹

Few Methodists seem to have believed that this war would in itself bring in the Golden Age (or millennium); but the benefits that were resulting from the war augured well for the new age that Methodists, for other reasons, believed to be emerging. The sheer scale of the war quickly convinced Methodists that it would cause great social and political alterations; believing in the long-term balance of good and evil in a moral universe, they were confident that such evil as was represented by the horrific hell of the war itself would leave to improvements.

Whatever be the outcome of the great war, we know it will usher in a new world order. Things will never be as bad again. For the moment it may look very much as it did in Peter's day - as if the end of all things is at hand, and yet now, as then, the signs are not wanting that the throes of Europe are but the birth-pains of a new and better state of things. It is the end of one age - the age of autocracy and militarism. It is the beginning of another - the age of democracy and brotherhood. Democracy will make the new Europe. [....] A thousand pities that it had to come this way; but a thousand times better to come this way than not at all.¹²

What enabled Methodists to have such confidence in the

approaching age?

The major factor in the creation of this confidence was the Methodist belief that Britain was participating in a war of ideas and ideals, not just a war waged for the sake of national interests.

[The real seat of war] is in the realm of ideas. The costly fighting is the noisy crash of mental, moral and spiritual conflict. The real battle is in the invisible Kingdom of principalities and powers. It is a spiritual war.... It is the crash of a crisis. New ideas are bombarding old strongholds and shattering them to pieces. The war is the outward and visible working of inward and spiritual powers; therefore, it is a war of judgment, a war of preparation, and an epoch-making war of progress. A new age is being born, and the old order is being purged by fire. Every crisis is a day of judgment, and this is a day of the Lord. The one thing on which all men are agreed, is that the old order is passing in fire and blood, and in its place there is arising a new world.¹³

The image of the white-hot crucible purging both Britain and European civilisation of their impurities was popular; it suggested that the war might not be an unmitigated hell, but instead was a brutally necessary preparation for an improved state of things. A.T. Guttery echoed Chadwick's sentiments in asserting that

...humanity has come to a terrific crisis never equalled since the Crucifixion. The world is in the melting-pot, and the resources of all our faith are tested as we seek to tell our vision of the type of civilisation that will emerge from this fiery alchemy.

...the present struggle is not merely military, political and economic; it is mental, moral and spiritual. It is the awful climax of one age and the birth of another. It is the gigantic result of material energies, the terrific consequence of unspiritual efficiency, which has driven the world into hideous but heroic revolt against false gods that have been honoured far too long.¹⁴

This belief was associated with the Methodist belief that Britain was waging a holy war in the most exalted interests of religion and humanity. Rev C.H. Laws believed

that '...the decades after the war will be full of great watchwords and battle-cries.'¹⁵ Britain was fighting for these 'watchwords and battle-cries', to such an extent that if Britain won, the ideals for which it was fighting would be victorious, thus constituting the characteristics of the new age.¹⁶ If Britain lost, these ideals would be vanquished and the victory of the ideals for which Germany was fighting would create an age too terrible to contemplate. But this was unthinkable, and Methodists did not think about it. Paris might posit, by implication, the possibility of a German victory; as a convinced patriot, however, his faith in the victory of the ideals for which Britain was contending belied his protestations that Britain might not necessarily be victorious.

This raises a problem. Did Methodists believe that Britain would win the war because the ideals for which it was fighting would be the characteristics of the new age that the war was assuredly creating? Or did they believe that these ideals would characterise the new age because the nation that was fighting for these ideals would win the war? With increasing assurance, Methodists appear to have believed in the former, rather than the latter, proposition. This was caused by the desperate need for reassurance that people really were living in an ordered universe (ordered, that is, according to the conceptions of social order peculiar to Methodists). The liberal optimism inherited from the later nineteenth century had been severely shaken by this new kind of war; unless the validity of the ideals characteristic of this liberalism was being confirmed by the war, much of the system of beliefs and values adhered to by Methodists was

under threat. The alternatives were rather stark, and Methodists were threatened with a kind of ideological rootlessness.

To counter this anxious unease, Methodist leaders increasingly viewed the war in terms of an ideological absolutism. As usual, A.T. Guttery expressed this ideological absolutism in rather eloquent and rather extreme language.

We must learn the spiritual lessons involved in the doom [Germany] has deserved. Ideals do prevail by the spiritual energy that is in them, and because that energy, when there is need, can with amazing versatility shelter material efficiency with its own weapons on its own field, an industrial, peaceful, chivalrous nation can, by virtue of the soul that is in it, crush brutality and scientific savagery, but it must not forget or lose its soul in the process.

It is this spiritual principle that makes a European hell a war of purgation. With wonderful unanimity men perceive this deeper significance of war. It is the white-hot crucible that is cleansing the metal of life and flinging to the bottom many a foul precipitate. It is the fiery ordeal through which the world will pass to a finer and gentler civilisation if only spiritually-minded men and women will be steadfast in their testimony, while they are valiant in their sacrifice.¹⁷

In other words: 'The victory of the Spirit is at hand, and it is for the Churches to give this deeper, truer interpretation of the horrors of the hour.'¹⁸ The social, moral, and religious benefits resulting from the war were an early indication of this victory; Guttery could claim, in all honesty of motive:

Already the world feels new energies of which it had not dreamed. A new reverence for peace, for the gentler arts, for the ministries of healing and the rights of smaller nations is being born. Already new groupings of nations, new mergings of classes, and new fusions of Churches are being promised. A more spiritual conception of life throbs in men who went out to fight and slay and remained to pray and suffer.¹⁹

But Guttery, like many writers, qualified his hopes for the coming age with the requirement that the Christian Church play its part. Even this qualification was dropped as the war dragged on; the new age, it was believed, had been of necessity created by the war, and it was a fact with which the Church would have to contend. This was the most extreme form of the idea that the war was the harbinger of a new age. By early 1918, it had become an acceptable interpretation of the reason for the war's existence. The idea of the war at all as an international conflict receded into the background.

What at the beginning was regarded as a clash of arms - a bid by Germany for the domination of the world - is now seen to be an issue of far wider and deeper import.... The material has given place to the Spiritual, and the contest is now seen to be one for supremacy between good and evil. ...the fact that Britain and her Allies are at war with Germany, is but an accidental incident, and in a measure insignificant as compared with the larger issues involved. ...this...implies that the present struggle between contending armies must run its course, and be brought to an end, because the wider issue embraces all humanity, and consequently the contending forces will be defined, not by nationality, but by personal, individual election under the banners of either God or the Devil.

We have come to the parting of the ways, and the demand of Elijah is as applicable to-day as ever. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" Here is the crux of the whole position, and all the conditions of universal peace hinge on the answer to this old-time question. What the ultimate result will be does not admit of any doubt. Righteousness, truth and justice must assuredly prevail, but before this desirable state is arrived at, I fear the world must pass through much greater suffering and anguish. It is in this connection that I believe the present war is being permitted by God, as a means to the execution of His divine purpose concerning mankind.²⁰

All of these views indicate that the belief in a new and better age did not arise simply from the war itself. The belief reflected the wartime contemplation of concerns and hopes among Methodists that had existed before the war. It is necessary to examine the nature of these concerns and

hopes in greater detail. Methodism reached a crisis during this war - a fundamental turning point compounded of the fears for the Church's influence that had emerged before the war, and the inability to explain realistically a modern war.

2. Methodism and the Masses

Two problems had vexed Methodism from the later nineteenth century: the declining evangelistic effectiveness of the Church, and the inability of Methodism to reach the wage-earning masses to any significant extent. These problems were increasingly seen as related, and so the concentration on them increasingly led Methodists to combine ideas of social improvement with hopes of denominational advance. By World War 1, Methodism was looking forward to an expected new age, believing that its duty was to help to shape that age.

From Wesley's time, Methodism zealously compiled statistics of various indicators of participation in its societies. But neither Wesley nor the early nineteenth century Methodists were ruled by these statistics; they were quite prepared to conduct purges of societies on a considerable scale. By the later nineteenth century, however, Methodism had changed from a sect promoting personal holiness to a denomination concerned with maintaining and extending its influence in the surrounding community. This is not to suggest that the first concern disappeared entirely or that the second concern had not been apparent from the start; the emphasis, however, was different, leading to a new type of Methodism. Methodism became concerned with conserving and increasing its numbers to an unprecedented extent; thus it tended to become oversensitive to the least

slackening in increase, or outright reduction, of its numbers. It is perhaps possible to discern a Methodist subjection to "the tyranny of statistics".

Where short-term fluctuations could be ignored, lengthy slow growth or reduction indicated that there were real problems to be discovered and remedied. New Zealand Methodism, in fact, enjoyed a fairly significant advance relative to the total population from 1874 to 1901, declared Methodist adherence relative to the total census population rising by over two per cent.²¹ But New Zealand Methodism was sensitive not only to its own progress, but to that of British Methodism as well. The Methodist denominations consisted mainly of immigrants, both clerical and lay, throughout the nineteenth century, and New Zealand Methodism long continued to follow the lead of British Methodism in all developments. Thus New Zealand Methodism wrestled with the problems that seemed to be besetting British Methodism, even when statistical progress was very different.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, however, Methodist advances in New Zealand were halted. The first reversal came with the 1906 census statistics, which showed a decline in Methodist adherence relative to the population of nearly one per cent to just over ten per cent. Within these figures, Wesleyan adherence declined considerably, and Primitive adherence increased considerably, but not enough to compensate for the Wesleyan decline. The 1911 census, less spectacularly, confirmed these trends.²²

Lineham notes:

This result may indicate the preference of many Methodist laity for old-fashioned Methodism as symbolised by the Primitive Methodist church. It is

very curious to note the growing appeal of the Primitive Methodists after the 1896 union.... This seems not to have been genuine Primitive Methodist membership since their unevenly distributed congregations did not significantly grow during the period. After union in 1913 disappointed Wesleyans demanded an enquiry into what had become of these fictional PMs [sic].²³

Table 7.1: Methodist Growth Rates 1900-1915

Year	Members	Sunday Scholars	Worshippers including Scholars
1900	14175	26634	80567
1901	14095	26096	80065
1902	14638	24905	-----
1903	15048	24748	82234
1904	15879	25411	85012
1905	16460	25730	86846
1906	17057	26527	87616
1907	17585	27147	88967
1908	17938	26673	87152
1909	18441	28063	88802
1910	19134	28823	87897
1911	19831	29333	89836
1912	20535	29355	87929
1913	20992	29141	83916
1914	21751	29917	80247
1915	22226	30191	81713

Source: See Appendices II, III, IV

"Fictional" these "Primitives" certainly were, and the genuine Primitives knew ²⁴it. A little more care in the assessment of denominational statistics, which were far more reliable in this case, would have shown the Wesleyans that the major contribution to the problem was Wesleyan rather than Primitive. Table 7.1 provides combined growth rates for the first fifteen years of the twentieth century. After a general decline in 1900 (wholly Wesleyan), membership rose steadily throughout the period; the average annual growth rate was 580 members, and only in 1908 did the growth not reach 400 members. But the figures for scholars and

Table 7.2: Methodist Growth Rates at 12 year intervals 1877-1925 (per cent)

a = members
b = Sunday scholars
c = worshippers including scholars

Period		Wesleyan	Primitive	Total Methodist
1877-1889	a	137.3	41.2	115.2
	b	74.3	92.3	77.0
	c	95.4	----	----
1889-1901	a	68.7	63.9	68.0
	b	16.2	35.5	19.4
	c	38.3	86.2	44.7
1901-1913	a	47.3	58.1	48.9
	b	8.3	26.2	11.7
	c	2.0	17.0	4.8
1913-1925	a	----	----	14.5
	b	----	----	6.4
	c	----	----	-12.4

Source: See Appendices II, III, IV

worshippers show fluctuations, wholly and mostly Wesleyan respectively. Most noticeable is the dramatic three-year slump in the figures for worshippers from 1912. The figure rallied in 1915, then continued a less dramatic slide for another six years.

The Wesleyans, beguiled by the census returns, blamed the Primitives, and the first united Conference directed the Welfare of the Church Committee to enquire into the problem.²⁵ Hames presents what are, on the surface, probably the natural conclusions; the membership rolls of some smaller Primitive circuits needed revision, and some of the "fringe people"

found the united Church not to their liking and withdrew.²⁶ Only an examination of how Primitive causes fared in the united Church can resolve this question; but the statistics show that the major contribution to the three-year slump, at least in the first two years, was Wesleyan. Table 7.2 confirms this pattern. Wesleyan growth rates outstripped Primitive growth rates in the 1880's partly because the Primitives seem to have been badly affected by the Long Depression.²⁷ After 1889, Primitive growth rates overtook Wesleyan growth rates almost entirely, even accounting for the boost of between ten and twenty per cent given to the Wesleyan statistics by the partial union of 1896.

This does not mean that Primitive growth rates after 1900 were spectacular. Table 7.2 refutes this view, and moreover, the figure for worshippers hides fluctuations. Again, minor decreases were recorded for both scholars and worshippers just before Methodist union in 1913. The Primitives too were subject to the general stagnation of New Zealand Methodism, but not as clearly as were the Wesleyans. Not only were the fictional Primitives really a Wesleyan problem, as Lineham notes; but the Wesleyan stagnation dated back beyond the turn of the century, and even, in the scholars' column, beyond partial union in 1896. New Zealand Methodism was constantly able to demonstrate successfully to its adherents the advantages of church membership; but it was becoming virtually unable to attract new adherents. This was a particularly severe problem at a time when the total population of New Zealand continued to increase rapidly.

As Norman Brookes shows, these statistics were the source of uncertainty for both groups in the first decade of

the twentieth century; the 1907 Primitive Conference joined a number of Wesleyan Conferences in deploring the reversals.²⁸ But no systematic action was attempted until after the 1911 census statistics were confirmed by the 1912 Wesleyan statistics. The 1912 Wesleyan Conference instituted the Welfare of the Church Committee '...to inquire into the welfare of the Church and to suggest lines of improvement.'²⁹

The Pastoral Address declared that

...we cannot rest satisfied with the condition of our societies. A shallow optimism is only less harmful than a fathomless pessimism. We are wise to probe, ...fearlessly and scientifically, the causes of declension in the spiritual life of the Church. ³⁰

The new Committee first reported to the first United Conference in 1913. Two issues caused particular difficulty to a Church already facing an age increasingly adopting luxurious and self-indulgent ways, and which was thus 'largely marked by indifference to the spiritual appeal.'

The first issue was analysed thus:

The theological unrest, resulting from the failure of old modes of expressing truth to satisfy the modern mind and the hesitancy of the pulpit to adapt itself to the new vocabulary and to provide a sufficient answer to the questions that are clamouring for settlement among all thinking men, has resulted in a wide distrust of the Church as a candid and competent teacher. ³¹

Rev C.H. Laws, in introducing the report, developed this claim, noting that all branches of human thought were moving away from a materialistic conception of the universe to an '...interpretation...in which the spiritual is the predominant fact.'³² So marked was this development that Laws warned Methodists against swinging to the popular modern cults that seemed to lose a sense of proportion in emphasising the spiritual side of life. Laws, rather patronisingly, viewed the response that was needed thus:

...it is our duty to interpret the age to itself. It is our high task to absorb and utilise the new knowledge, to discard nothing that is really true, to separate ascertained fact from philosophic and scientific theory, to keep a watchful, candid, balanced mind. We have to command our feet upon a wise via media - on the one hand to avoid the fascination of ill-digested heresies, and on the other to shun a crabbed conservatism which would deny that God has more light to break out of His Word.³³

While believing that Methodist preachers had to face new thought honestly and present its conclusions faithfully, Laws did not believe that old thought required outright exclusion through having lost all usefulness.

The age is new, full of new cries and new hopes; but it is old at heart. It is only the outward garb of the world that changes. We are full of talk about the new times, the strange atmosphere in which we do our work, the unaccustomed watchwords of which modern debate is full. But the deep heart of humanity beats unchangingly, and the cry of the soul is still as in the days of the Psalmist, "O that I knew where I might find him!" There are things in which we become new-fashioned at our peril. What are they? The fact of Christ as a personal, saving Lord; the reality of divine, converting grace in the human soul; the abiding Spirit of God in the surrendered heart; the immemorial command to be our brother's keeper. The age can never dawn when such a Gospel shall be outworn and discarded.³⁴

The second issue raised in the Committee's report focused on the influence of the Socialist movement, which the Church had long been attempting to understand and cooperate with successfully.

The overflow of Christian activity into non-Church channels has reduced the status of the Church in the eyes of many, as a necessary institution in the community. Once the Church was the sole educator of the people and the dispenser of charity. Within her bosom all the great philanthropic movements were born. But to-day there has grown up outside her walls a new social propaganda, of which she is largely fearsome and uncertain, and men feel that they can live a highly serviceable life, consecrated to the causes of brotherhood and humanity, without Church attachment.³⁵

This was a further instance of an issue which New Zealand

Methodism took up from the British Methodist experience. A major new process seems to have entered prominence in the later 1870's; Methodism began to develop an increasingly collectivist view of its mission. It is noticeable that from this period, the amount of space devoted in the Methodist journals to questions of socialism, the Churches' influence among the workers, temperance, and moral politics increased markedly. This was a period which, in Britain, saw all the Methodist denominations, except the New Connexion, establish a connexional temperance structure.³⁶ In 1885, the first Wesleyan central mission, spearheading the Forward Movement, was authorised and founded.³⁷ Such developments were viewed with interest and approval by New Zealand Methodists.

The Forward Movement, with Rev Hugh Price Hughes as its chief advocate, created much tension within British Wesleyan Methodism; a younger generation of radicals challenged the relevance of the methods of an older generation. The purpose of the Forward Movement is the subject of some dispute, partly because the term itself is vague; it meant different things to different people.³⁸ Robert Currie criticises K.S. Inglis for viewing the Forward Movement in terms of the thesis Inglis develops for a wider ecclesiastical context,³⁹ but Currie himself falls into the same trap. The whole movement, symbolised in Hughes, has become a victim of the embarrassment of later religious generations regarding its moralistic triumphalism, and so it lacks the exhaustive treatment which early nineteenth century Methodism continues to receive; but some features can be noted.

For Inglis, the Forward Movement was

...an attempt to awaken Nonconformists to duties which the young believed that their elders had

neglected - especially the duties to think out Christianity freshly in the light of new secular knowledge and opinion, and to grapple with a changing society.⁴⁰

The challenge, however, was not taken up in any consistently logical way, not even by the movement's advocates. Thus the movement tended to degenerate into a generalised call for Methodism to advance, with special emphasis placed on certain areas. Currie goes further, claiming that

The context of the Forward Movement is the crisis in Methodism caused by resurgent Anglicanism, rather than the overlapping crisis caused by awareness of a vast urban population alienated from Christianity.⁴¹

But it is difficult to understand why one viewpoint should be preferred to the other merely according to the ecclesiastical context being examined by a particular writer. Inglis' insights seem to be more a part of Currie's argument than a substitute for it. Social reform was part of a grand mental scheme pursued with a lot of bombast by the Forward Movement's advocates; they envisaged a Methodist Church combining social service and reform, Methodist union, and the ability to reach all classes in one successful movement sweeping the nation. The collective approach to the unconverted included all these factors and more; Hughes' advocacy of the moralism of the "Nonconformist conscience" led to his exposure of Parnell's adultery and the consequent wrecking of the first Irish Home Rule Bill. The collective approach to the world also led to a desire to shape the political world order, which, curiously, produced both the radical and imperialist varieties of liberalism in Hughes.⁴²

The significance of the Forward Movement for New Zealand Methodism lay in the pleasure with which its emergence in Britain was greeted. New Zealand Wesleyan Methodism was not

divided over the movement, unlike its British counterpart. This reflected the different nature and composition of the New Zealand Church. Lineham notes: "Methodism was planted in New Zealand in the generation after the schisms; there were no splits in colonial Methodism."⁴³ Denominational statistics show that in 1855 the Maori Mission dominated New Zealand Wesleyan Methodism; by 1874, the Maori Mission had collapsed and the European work had become the major Wesleyan concern.⁴⁴ Immigration had provided, and continued to provide, these Europeans throughout the rest of the nineteenth century; Methodism's rapid increase was caused not by local evangelism, but by "...the immigration of farm labourers and skilled industrial workers with a Methodist background."⁴⁵ These Methodists were increasingly inclining towards liberal Methodism;⁴⁶ the denomination which they established in New Zealand lacked the strongly established ecclesiastical hierarchy which in Britain opposed changes to the Wesleyan/Buntingite system.

Even more important than the immigration of its members was the arrival of two men who became probably the most influential ministers in New Zealand Wesleyan Methodism before 1900; William Morley and W.J. Williams, who arrived in 1863 and 1870 respectively. These men, and their ministerial generation, were beginning to take over the reins of office from the great leaders of the missionary and early pioneering period by about 1880.⁴⁷ Morley has been justly praised as a great statesman; he built the basic administrative structure of New Zealand Methodism at a time when "The Church was no longer in a haphazard missionary situation, but needed to set its house in order and build for

the future in a statesmanlike manner."⁴⁸

Williams was just as influential in his own sphere, but Methodism has been much less willing to acclaim his impact. For thirteen years from 1880, his contributions as a columnist (under the pseudonym of "Vigilans") and/or as editor (for nine of those years) to the Methodist journals provided one of the most important spurs to Methodist concentration on political moral reforms, particularly prohibition. All the causes that were dear to the Forward Movement were dear to Williams, and he spent his life in one long agitation to shape the kind of Church that he wanted to see: a united Methodist Church, evangelistically aggressive and successful, extending its influence into national politics in the interests of public morality. Morley's life work was an administrative structure that Methodists were grateful to possess; Williams' life work was a view of the Church and the world which made later generations uncomfortable. It is highly significant that a later Methodist generation found Morley a suitable subject for a biography, but not Williams.

The influence of these ministers reflected the liberal character of New Zealand Wesleyan Methodism. This Church was part of the Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Church, which from 1874 met in five Annual Conferences, with an approximately triennial General Conference. The New Zealand Conference was renowned as the most radical Annual Conference in the Australasian Connexion,⁴⁹ very enthusiastic in its support for constitutional changes in Wesleyan Methodism in the later nineteenth century. This brought it into tension with Australian conservatism, and eventually led to a

strongly felt desire for independent status in order to make reforms unhindered. As Hames shows, crucial in this was a desire for New Zealand Methodist union, rejected by the General Conference in 1884 owing to dissatisfaction with the basis mutually agreed to in New Zealand, and rejected by the New Zealand Primitives in 1896 owing to dissatisfaction with the conditions laid down by the General Conference.⁵⁰ This left New Zealand Primitives unwilling to unite with a Wesleyan Church not separated from Australia, and the desire for union in New Zealand eventually became strong enough to unite New Zealand Wesleyans behind a renewed campaign for separation, which was achieved in 1910.⁵¹

Despite the unusually high degree of liberalism in New Zealand Wesleyan Methodism, however, some of the tensions characterising British Methodism were brought to New Zealand. The Free Methodist cause was established in New Zealand in 1860, when the Wesleyan purge of 1849 was still a fresh memory.⁵² The Bible Christian cause was not established in New Zealand until 1877, however; it is noticeable that the initiative for this venture came from Britain.⁵³ The Free Methodist cause was strengthened by the fact that its quarrel with Wesleyan Methodism was more recent and spectacular; but its main minister, Rev Samuel MacFarlane,⁵⁴ soon realised that separate existence was unrealistic,

...especially as the Wesleyans themselves had moved in a democratic direction, so that the Free Methodists could no longer take their stand on any fundamental difference of principle. ...the squabbles were remote, meaningless and frustrating in the colonial situation.⁵⁵

The two smallest denominations united with the Wesleyans in 1896, and "...were absorbed into the general stream with hardly a ripple."⁵⁶ The only significant "ripple" was the

refusal of trustees to hand over to the united Church the Mount Eden Free Methodist church property in 1897.⁵⁷ This problem emphasises the fact that enough tension existed to keep these bodies going for many years; but only in Canterbury was the Methodist constituency large enough for the two smaller denominations to become extensively established, and the consolidation of continuing causes "...reduced [them] to filling in the gaps left by the Wesleyans."⁵⁸

Tensions between the Primitives and the Wesleyans were a little more meaningful. The Primitive cause was never large before 1900, but it was large enough to instil a sense of independence and self-confidence into the Primitive witness; this seems to have been reinforced by social tensions which partly reflected the British experience. Only detailed study of various local Primitive and Wesleyan churches, however, can finally determine the extent (or even the existence) of these tensions. But there were real differences in approach between the two Churches; the "unself-conscious evangelism" of the Primitives, as demonstrated in an account of an early twentieth century Primitive church,⁵⁹ was quite foreign to the Wesleyans, who were searching for dignified worship and cultured respectability. Primitive Methodism was not averse to the developing respectable liberal collectivism of the age; common action in the prohibition movement was a powerful unifying factor between the two Churches. But the simplicity and fervour of its evangelism, with all its individualising tendencies, became alien to the Wesleyan outlook on the world. In an age when social groupings and problems were

perceived collectively, Wesleyans sought to redefine their mission in terms of collective remedies. Methodist zeal had not evaporated entirely, but its expression in the intensity of evangelistic and perfectionist forms was no longer acceptable; therefore a new mode of expression was necessary, and holiness became equated with collectivist reformism rather than individualistic introspection.

By 1880, Wesleyans in particular (and other Methodist denominations too) were beginning to notice the problem of the masses. In New Zealand, the Long Depression was beginning, and poverty was for many years an especially acute social problem. But Wesleyan Methodism was also finding itself unable to attract wage-earners to its services in large numbers. These two problems seemed to coalesce in what Methodists saw as the growing secularity of the age; the Church was beginning to compete with an increasing variety of amusements. The Church could adopt some of the more innocuous amusements, thereby lending its sanction to them; but opposition to certain more vicious amusements grew. Notable among these were drunkenness and gambling (especially at racecourses); other targets of moral indignation were prostitution, pugilism, the opium traffic, dancing, and cards. Of course, moral outrage was a traditional puritan approach to communal amusements, and it was heightened by the perceived worsening of the two problems that Methodism was now examining. The preference of secular amusements to church attendance was Sabbath desecration; and vicious amusements not only deadened a person's moral senses, but could ruin that person temporally as well. The combination of these developments engendered a series of often

contradictory responses; the most outstanding of these responses was the prohibition campaign.

Not surprisingly, all these developments were reflected in the thought of W.J. Williams, as delivered in his lecture to the 1888 Wesleyan Conference on "The Relation of the Church to Social and Public Questions".⁶⁰ He began by noting the profusion of contemporary writings on '"Christianity's Coming Battle"', asserting that a gigantic contest which would settle Christianity's fate was approaching. Agreement was lacking, however, 'concerning the precise nature of the issue at stake.' Williams believed such a battle was indeed approaching; the motive was the Church's relation not to church order, biblical criticism, or doctrinal standards, but to 'social and public questions'. The Christian Church would gain the world's reverence only by being useful to the world.

What is the Church worth to the men of to-day? What side is it taking in the great social conflict that to-day is convulsing the whole world? How far is it waking up to give battle to customs and institutions that have been framed with devilish craft for human degradation? These are the burning questions on the answer to which the fate of the Church really hangs. And if in some quarters the Church is looked upon with coldness and distrust, if the impression anywhere prevails that its mission is accomplished, and that to-day it is obstructive rather than helpful to human progress, it is because while doctrinal and ecclesiastical questions have received due attention social questions, as such, have been shamefully neglected.⁶¹

Taken alone, such a statement represented a major switch from an evangelical world-view to a liberal world-view; so Williams introduced a caveat, to try to hold traditional Methodist concerns within the new world-view.

What is the grand end for which the Christian Church exists? Is it not to confer upon the human race the largest conceivable benefit? You may remind me that its aims are distinctly spiritual; that it exists to spread the gospel, and to secure the conversion of

sinners. You may warn me that Christ said, "My Kingdom is not of this world," and that it is perilous to endeavour to divert the attention of the Church from the great object of its mission, viz., to save souls. I readily grant that the most terrible disaster that could befall the Church would be the loss of its supreme sense of responsibility in relation to the salvation of men. It has received a solemn commission from its great Head to go and evangelise all nations; and the great note of the gospel undoubtedly relates to the deliverance of man from sin and his restoration to the favour and image of God. But I decline to believe that the gospel touches man in one department of his being only, even though for that department there may be claimed the pre-eminence of spiritual and eternal relationships. I decline to admit that the gospel leaves man in ignorance of his duties to his fellow-men, or to the thousand and one interests that press upon him in virtue of his relationship to the world at large. The gospel by no means narrows its range to man, the individual; it addresses itself also to men in the aggregate, as society, and concerning social claims and social responsibilities it will be found to deliver itself with no uncertain sound.⁶²

Williams admitted that all schemes, without the genuine spirituality generated by an ongoing dependence on Christ, would founder. On the other hand,

The Great Head of the Church touched humanity in its widest extremes, embracing in the breadth and depth of His compassion the entire circle of human needs; and to the extent to which the Church has fallen short of the same lofty ideal of service it has been unfaithful to its profession of the sovereignty of Jesus Christ.⁶³

This unfaithfulness had allowed the social evils which confronted late nineteenth century Methodists to develop; Methodism was now required to confront them.

Williams then examined three areas to which Methodists gave considerable attention in this period. The first area was politics. He criticised the theory that Christians should have nothing to do with politics.

According to this theory human society is made up of two sharply defined classes: saints and sinners; or is otherwise mapped out under the divisions of the Church and the world. Politics lies well within the worldly division; it is a business that belongs to sinners and none else. Can a man touch pitch and not

be defiled? No more can saints engage in politics without losing the odour of sanctity and soiling their beautiful garments. The aims of the Church are exclusively spiritual and sacred; it is a shocking degradation and departure from its proper sphere for the Church to step over into a domain so essentially secular and corrupting as politics. There will be no politics in heaven; hence those who claim to be already citizens of heaven should have nothing to do with politics on earth.⁶⁴

The existence of such a theory was easily explained by Christian disgust with political corruption; but, curiously, Williams maintained that the moral reputation of politics was so bad because Christians refused to enter politics, pleading the theory described above. Apparently, he meant that the "Christian no-politics theory" and political corruption would always be discovered together, never otherwise.

For Williams, the "Christian no-politics" theory was unsound because

...in the present order of things civil government is a necessity. ...the welfare of the community is deeply involved in the character of the laws promulgated and in the manner in which such laws are administered. ...in a popular and representative government, such as that under which we live, each member of the community possesses a certain measure of responsibility. Call him what you like, saint or sinner, there is a duty resting upon him in virtue of his relationship to those around him which no honest man will think of shirking. The vote that he possesses as a citizen and an elector carries with it a serious moral obligation, for the exercise of which God, as well as society, will hold him accountable. As claiming the protection which a well-ordered civil government secures, every man, and particularly every Christian man, is bound to do what he can to ensure that the government of the country shall be maintained in the highest possible state of efficiency.⁶⁵

The Christian citizen was to create and maintain this maximum efficiency by using his vote to elect a moral (preferably a Christian) candidate, irrespective of party affiliations.

For the highest ends contemplated in legislation there are but two parties - the party of Christ, and

the party of the devil; it must be made more clear than ever from our pulpits and platforms that every vote given to an immoral candidate is a vote given to the devil, and a direct denial of the claims of Christ. [....] To vote on any consideration whatever either for an immoral man or an immoral measure is not only a wrong done to society, but is a sin in the sight of Almighty God.⁶⁶

Finally, Williams took a sideswipe at the New Zealand Anglican Church's attempt to establish itself through securing State aid for denominational schools: 'It is high treason for the commonwealth to allow personal or denominational claims to stand in the way of the reform so loudly called for in the moral tone of colonial politics.'⁶⁷

Williams then tackled the issue of temperance. He began by expressing surprise at 'The slow and late development of ideas, that are now universally recognised as eminently philanthropic and Christlike....'⁶⁸ He bemoaned the Church's slowness to attack the evil of the manufacture and sale of strong drink, and especially bewailed Methodism's tardiness in following Wesley's lead in denouncing the evil trade.

Dr Punshon once remarked that, if Methodism from the beginning had totally identified itself with the Temperance movement it would have taken rank as the mightiest social force in the community, and nothing would have stood against it.⁶⁹

Methodism and other Churches were now rectifying their mistake.

Everybody now perceives that the Church is in its proper place in the van of the Temperance movement. It is plain now to the dullest comprehension that the liquor traffic wages war with terrible success on all the interests which it is clearly the duty of the Church to protect. What is it but strong drink that cuts off multitudes from the ordinances of religion? What is it but strong drink that blunts the moral sensibilities of many even of those to whom the gospel is preached? What is it but strong drink that is the devil's most potent agent for luring to destruction multitudes for whom Christ died? What is it but strong drink that is the most formidable rival of the Church on the mission-field? What is it but strong drink that has robbed the Church of some of

its brightest stars, and has covered it with dishonour and reproach? Surely there can be no quarter given to such a dire foe to all that is brightest and best in human life; and every weapon the Church can command must be vigorously employed to secure its utter overthrow.⁷⁰

Those espousing such attitudes would be content only with total national prohibition.

We must go to the legislature of the country and demand that the legal sanction given to this work of the devil must be withdrawn, and that at any rate the people will have the right to say whether the public-house system shall exist among them or not. We must cry aloud to Almighty God; we must plead earnestly with our fellow-men; we must open our ears and hearts to the wails of the broken-hearted, to the cries of the despairing, to the bitter reproaches of the lost. Stung to the quick by the insult offered to the Most High, and by the cruel wrong done to millions of our race, we must strain every nerve, and agitate, agitate, agitate, until the heart and conscience of the nation shall be roused to the pitch of a righteous anger, and men shall start up demanding that this towering curse of the ages shall be utterly overthrown.⁷¹

Methodism was able to unite enthusiastically in the prohibition campaign. This had a major long-term effect. It was probably the most important step in committing New Zealand Methodism to the theory that perfection is a social phenomenon to be obtained by the successful advocacy of a political programme. Since then, Methodism has redefined its political programme a number of times, but it has never lost its belief that public righteousness (or social justice, as the vision has been redefined in the twentieth century) is a vital and worthwhile goal for the Christian Church to pursue. In effect, Methodism's aim was that Christianity itself should become a political party with a programme to be applied when it gained power. Such an admission would have been abhorrent to prohibitionist Methodists; to them, this was a matter of national righteousness irrespective of party political considerations. But the prohibitionists were never

strong enough to force politicians to legislate into existence their dreams for an alcohol-free New Zealand; politicians soon discovered that prohibition was not a partisan political issue in New Zealand.⁷²

Moreover, prohibition was the solution of a certain socio-religious group to the problems of society. Anthony Grigg sees the issue as a peculiarly nonconformist, conservative, and middle class way of seeking to christianise society. Indeed, prohibition was the expression of a viewpoint concerning society held by the middle classes (or those aspiring to such groups).⁷³ New Zealand drew most of its strength from these socio-economic groups. But within this broad middle class base, important differences existed which Grigg has missed. He overestimates the conservatism of the movement; prohibitionism was quite compatible with reformist liberalism of a rather radical tinge, an ideological position which was common among New Zealand Methodist leaders during this period.⁷⁴

Grigg also sees prohibitionism as an expression of "puritan" (would "evangelical" be better?) rather than "sacramentarian" values.⁷⁵ As will be shown below he is quite correct in linking the development of prohibitionism with the evangelical Churches' allegedly decreasing influence in society.

Beneath this puritanism can be detected a sense of urgent need to assert the Church's authority in society at a time when it was only too well aware that its influence was waning among a steadily increasing population.⁷⁶

This was certainly true of New Zealand Methodism. Faced with both an obvious social problem and the decline of its own authority and influence; Methodism naturally turned to its

own ethos, in both theology and ethics, in order to attempt to secure and extend its own position in a changing social situation. Methodism was part of the evangelical grouping whose ethical tradition stressed economic conservatism, private charity, and individual self-help.⁷⁷ But again, Grigg underestimates the extent to which prohibitionism was a new departure for the evangelical tradition. As will again be shown below, prohibitionism was made possible by the development of collectivistic reformism as an aid to (and increasingly, a substitute for) individualistic evangelism.

Nevertheless, this traditional nonconformist ethic remained influential, and in Methodism's case, it was reinforced by the longstanding fear of practical Antinomianism, bringing anarchy, revolution, and lawlessness, that Methodism inherited from Wesley.⁷⁸ Wesley, as a result, spent much of his life controverting the antinomian tendencies of Reformation Protestantism, especially Calvinism. The threat and actuality of revolution in the later eighteenth century led "...the Wesleyans [to make] themselves leading opponents of revolution and the defenders of divine right and passive obedience...."⁷⁹

In the late nineteenth century, a new threat to social order appeared - Atheistic Socialism. W.J. Williams deemed it quite proper to oppose this revolutionary force, but he believed that there was a constructive Socialism as well as a destructive Communism. Moreover, the espousal of Atheistic Socialism by working men was not surprising when, '...as has so often been the case, God has been represented as being on the side of manifest tyranny and wrong.'⁸⁰

Among the causes operating most successfully in shutting off the working classes from religious

ordinances must be placed the conviction that has somehow possessed their minds that the Church is in antagonism to their special interests. It is an institution for the rich and privileged classes; in any conflict that arises between labour and capital, between employer and employed, the Church sides with the wealthier and stronger party. All that it has to say to those who are lower down in the social scale is that they must learn to pay due deference to their superiors, and humbly to do their duty in that station of life to which Providence has called them.⁸¹

In order to return Socialism to a theistic foundation, Williams asserted the requirement of a more faithful interpretation of the mind of Christ.

The question is, Where would Christ be in relation to such a movement? Judging by the spirit He breathed, and the social attitude He assumed when He dwelt among men, should we not expect to find Him to-day espousing the cause of the needy and the oppressed, denouncing greed and unrighteousness in all quarters, and demanding, as essential to the world's progress, a practical recognition of the claim of universal brotherhood?⁸²

Williams believed that there were signs that the Church was 'awaking to its obligation.'

The "bitter cry of the outcast" has touched the heart of the Church as never before, and schemes of practical benevolence are being set in motion with unexampled rapidity. There is a healthy protest heard against long-standing social abuses, and the rights of social brotherhood are being enforced with a vigour that compels respect. There is a wholesome fusillade against the damnable greed which leads men to grind the face of the poor, and to augment their own gains at the cost of human lives. There is an outspoken deliverance concerning the responsibilities of wealth, and rich men are plainly told that they have obligations to those under them other than that of regarding them as cattle or machines. The discontent, in fact, of which Socialism with all its dangers and distortions is the outcome, is being courageously traced to its source, and the truth is being recognised that the one grand remedy for the social ills that afflict our race is a common-sense application of the Gospel of Christ.⁸³

As an avid supporter of the Forward Movement, Williams was particularly delighted over the methods of the West London Mission, led by Hugh Price Hughes. Here was another sign that the Methodist interpretation of holiness as a check to

revolution had shifted; "holiness" had changed from Wesley's emphasis on individualistically introspective perfection to Hughes' emphasis on evangelistically collectivist social reform.

Williams concluded his address with an examination of the meaning of Jesus' prayer, "Thy Kingdom come."⁸⁴

To what consummation are we looking forward? Is it to a state of rapture - an experience that is ethereal and transcendental? Is it to a sphere that lies far off from the familiar earth, where strange voices salute the ear, and the glory that shines is a light that never was on land or sea? Shall we be so far "caught up" that the ancient landmarks shall disappear, and there shall be no more stars and no more sea? And is there to be no further use for the world as we know it now? Will the coming of Christ's Kingdom chase the white sails from the ocean, and hush the merry songs of the vintage, and still the noise of machinery, and drive the ploughman from the fields? Will an awful silence brood over the broad domains of nature, akin to that which is reigned before man went forth to subdue and replenish the earth? Is Christ to come only to create a desert, and call that peace? Or is the Kingdom of Christ to come as the light of the morning comes, revealing a familiar landscape, opening the eyes of the sleeper, healing the suffering, bringing peace to the weary, and sending forth the strong with strength renewed to the labours of another day?⁸⁵

The late nineteenth century liberal optimism rejected the belief that Christ's kingdom was a state of eternal felicity beyond this world and this life. Christ's kingdom was an earthly kingdom, and a major advance (if not the Golden Age) seemed to be around the corner. There were signs of this possibility by World War I; not only was peace becoming more popular, but social tensions were being reduced as the condition of the poor was beginning to be ameliorated. Most importantly, prohibition seemed near; National Prohibition had secured a vote of over fifty-five per cent at the 1911 Licensing Poll, and the continuing increase of the prohibition vote seemed to augur well for the future. The

spirit of early twentieth century Methodist optimism, brave in the face of numerical and evangelistic setbacks that seemed to be only temporary, is well captured in the final words of Williams' address.

It is this world, and not heaven, nor any place in the air midway between earth and heaven, that is to be the scene of the coming of Christ's Kingdom. No paralysing touch will He lay on the arm of industry; no withering ban will He place upon the pursuits of science; all genuine human interests will thrive beneath His sway, and nothing will disappear but the hideous traces of the works of darkness.

"A new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" - that is the bright vision set before us when we pray, "Thy Kingdom come." And in no surer way are we labouring to secure the fulfilment of that vision than when we lay ourselves out to permeate all social interests with the purifying influence of the gospel of Christ. When Christ is regnant in our halls of legislation, in our walks of commerce, in our guilds of literature, in all our civil and social relationships, then shall come to pass that which is written: "And there shall be no more curse; for the former things have passed away."⁸⁶

World War 1 brought with it such unprecedented horror and barbarity the Methodists found it necessary to find very strong reasons for asserting that the war was worthwhile. This need created a genre of wartime religious writing that attempted to achieve this aim. Most significantly, it was believed that the war would inaugurate a new age of public righteousness. Methodists had long been discussing an expected new age; they sought to counter their declining evangelistic effectiveness and their estrangement from the wage-earning masses. The impact of the Forward Movement in British Wesleyan Methodism created some new emphases, and New Zealand Methodism adopted its concentration on temperance (strongly) and on socialism (not so strongly). Methodists believed that success in these fields marked a big step towards the Kingdom of God on earth.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER 7

- 1 'Will the War be Worth its Cost?' (editorial)
NZMT, 10/7/1915, p.8.
- 2 'Has the Empire Stood the Test?' (leader),
NZMT, 30/9/1916, p.8.
- 3 Cocker, J., 'Is any Good Coming Out of the
War?' (leader), NZMT, 18/8/1917, p.8.
- 4 Chappell, A.B., 'The Bright Side of the War'
(sermon), NZMT, 5/8/1916, p.9.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid., p.12.
- 8 'Benefits of War', NZMT, 24/6/1916, p.4.
- 9 See below, Ch.9, p.297
- 10 'Two Sides of the War Cloud' (editorial),
NZMT, 15/5/1915, p.8. Text quoted: Proverbs
14:34.
- 11 'The Bright Side of the War', p.12. Text
referred to: Romans 8:28.
- 12 Paris, P.R., 'A Call to Prayer' (address),
NZMT, 8/1/1916, p.9. Text: 1 Peter 4:7,
Paris' career: entered the ministry in 1906;
President in 1938; Editor, NZMT, April 1924-
March 1934; Chairman of the District four
times; died in 1942.
- 13 Chadwick, S., 'The Conflict of Ideas', NZMT,
16/2/1918, p.12.
- 14 'The Victory of the Spirit', NZMT,
23/12/1916, p.5.
- 15 'Methodism after the War: The New Age', NZMT,
15/9/1917, p.4.
- 16 See above, Ch.4, pp.104-10
- 17 'The Victory of the Spirit', p.5.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 "B.B", 'Thoughts Suggested by the War', NZMT,
16/3/1918, p.16. Text quoted: 1 Kings 18:21.
- 21 See Appendix V.
- 22 See Appendix V.
- 23 Lineham, p.6; emphasis added. Some puzzling
features emerge. Considering that partial
union occurred in 1896, why did the new
trends emerge in the 1906 census statistics
rather than those for 1901? What was the
regional and local distribution of Primitive
(and Wesleyan) census adherence? Answers to
these questions will probably support
Lineham's contentions; it is highly likely
that they will reveal local tensions within
the Methodist fold as well.
- 24 The Primitives investigated the 1911 census
statistics, and found that 7545 out of 27445
declared Primitives lived in boroughs and
counties where no Primitive ministration was
available! ('Census of Religions', NZPM,
1/2/1912, p.41)
- 25 MCNZ, 1913, p.73
- 26 Coming of Age, p.9.

- 27 At least the Primitives themselves advanced the belief that their work had suffered through "the exodus of population to the adjacent colonies" during the period (see J. Guy and W.S. Potter, Jubilee Memorial Volume; or, Fifty Years of Primitive Methodist in New Zealand: A Series of Historical and Biographical Sketches, from the Establishment of Primitive Methodism in this Colony to its Jubilee Year, 1893-4, Wellington, Primitive Methodist Book Depot, 1893, p.293). Rev William S Potter's career: entered the Primitive ministry in 1876; President of the Primitive Methodist District Conference in 1891 and 1901; became a Supernumerary in 1919. Rev James Guy's career: entered the Primitive ministry in 1875; President of the Primitive Methodist District Conference in 1887 and 1893; became a Supernumerary in 1921.
- 28 'New Zealand Methodists and Church Union: An Historical and Sociological Survey', Christchurch, University of Canterbury, 1976 (unpublished M.A. thesis), p.38.
- 29 Ready, W., and Lawry, S., Pastoral Address, MCNZ, 1912, p.26.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 MCNZ, 1913, p.71.
- 32 'The Pulse of the Times', NZMT, 22/3/1913, p.3.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Ibid., pp3-4, Text quoted: Job 23:3.
- 35 MCNZ, 1913, p.71.
- 36 Brake, G.T., Drink: Ups and Downs of Methodist Attitudes to Temperance, London, Oliphants, 1974, pp.19-23, 65-6, 88-90, 98-100.
- 37 Inglis, K.S., Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England, London, Routledge, 1963, p.91
- 38 Ibid., pp.70-1.
- 39 Currie, pp.177-8.
- 40 Inglis, p.70.
- 41 Currie, p.178
- 42 For an incisive interpretation of Hughes' (muddled) thought, see J.H.S. Kent, "Hugh Price Hughes and the Nonconformist Conscience", in G.V. Bennett and J.D. Walsh (eds.), Essays in Modern English Church History: In Memory of Norman Sykes, London, Black, 1966, pp.181-205. One wonders what deleterious influence on Methodist theology and social philosophy was worked by the illogical confusion of the Forward Movement.
- 43 Lineham, p.3.
- 44 Out of the Common Way, pp.28-9, 51-2.
- 45 Lineham, p.5.
- 46 But note John Kent's criticisms of the use of political terms in describing early nineteenth century Wesleyan history ("The Wesleyan Methodists to 1849", in A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain, vol.2, London, Epworth Press, 1978, pp.250-1). Kent prefers "Low" and "High" Methodism.

- "Liberal" is followed here because New Zealand Methodism strongly espoused liberal political theory and social philosophy.
- 47 See above, Ch.1, pp19-20. It is interesting to note that at the first New Zealand Wesleyan Annual Conference in 1874, the average age of the ministers was thirty-three (Gadd, p.11).
- 48 Out of the Common Way, p.63.
- 49 Ibid., p.92.
- 50 Ibid., pp.143-4.
- 51 Ibid., p.144.
- 52 Ibid., p.60.
- 53 Gilmore, L.R.M., "The Bible Christian Church in New Zealand", PWHS(NZ), vol.5, no.3, October 1947, p.5.
- 54 Entered the Free Methodist ministry in 1852; Free Methodist Connexional Secretary in New Zealand 1875-95; became a Supernumerary in 1885.
- 55 Out of the Common Way, pp.95-6. For a concise summary of the difficulties attending Free Methodist ministration in New Zealand (some of which also apply to the other minor Methodist denominations), see S.G. Macfarlane, "Free Methodism in New Zealand: An Outline of History", PWHS(NZ), vol.14, no.4, July 1958, p.17.
- 56 Out of the Common Way, p.99.
- 57 Macfarlane, p.19.
- 58 Out of the Common Way, p.61.
- 59 Ibid., pp.103-5.
- 60 For the following argument, see NZM, 18/2/1888, p.5; 25/2/1888, p.5; 3/3/1888, p.5.
- 61 18/2/1888, p.5.
- 62 Ibid. Text quoted: John 18:36.
- 63 Ibid.
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 Ibid.
- 66 25/2/1888, p.5.
- 67 Ibid.
- 68 Ibid.
- 69 Ibid. William Morley Punshon was a leading British Wesleyan Minister in the mid-nineteenth century.
- 70 3/3/1888, p.5.
- 71 Ibid.
- 72 Grigg, A.R., 'The Attack on the Citadels of Liquordom', Dunedin, University of Otago, 1977 (unpublished Ph.D. thesis), ch.9.
- 73 Ibid., pp.66-9
- 74 For a fuller consideration of this and other problems to be stated immediately below, see Ch.9, pp.291-4
- 75 Grigg, pp.73-84.
- 76 Ibid., p.72.
- 77 Ibid., pp.52-3.
- 78 See Semmel, especially pp54-71.
- 79 Ibid., p.171
- 80 3/3/1888, p.5.
- 81 Ibid.

- 82 Ibid.
- 83 Ibid.
- 84 Matthew 6:10.
- 85 Ibid.
- 86 Ibid. Texts quoted: 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation
22:3; 21:4.

CHAPTER VIII

THE METHODIST WITNESS

The war broke out at a time when Methodists were experiencing some difficulty in winning acceptance for their message among New Zealanders. The days of numerical expansion were finished, though seemingly temporarily, and the spirit of the age seemed to militate against the likelihood of widespread revival. Moreover, Methodists were experiencing some doubt and disagreement concerning the exact nature of their message. Believing that the war would usher in a new age, the Church regarded it as a heaven-sent opportunity to embark on a new period of expansion. Methodists thus began to speculate concerning the kind of Church that would produce revival in the new conditions to be confronted after the war.

1. The Search for a Wartime Revival

Methodists believed that the early days of war had led to a revival of religion. This could easily have been wishful thinking; not only did they dearly desire a revival, but they believed that the anxiety created by the war would engender a serious spirit driving people to seek the consolations of religion. But Methodists did discern signs of a new religiosity among the people. W.J. Williams noted approvingly:

It is most instructive to note how God is recognised in every farewell address to the troopers. Somehow, the men who have not a word to say about religion on ordinary occasions are strongly touched with the sense of spiritual need at such a crisis, and pray most fervently that those who are pushing out into the unknown dangers before them may be kept under the guidance and protection of Almighty God.¹

He soon lauded the 'magnificent' support of New Zealanders

for war relief funds.² The Auckland Synod, meeting in November 1914, expressed the usual optimism of the age in declaring

...our unswerving faith in the absolute sovereignty [sic] of Christ, and [resolving] to preach His Gospel as the only hope for the nobler civilization which we expect to arise from the ruins when the smoke of battle has disappeared.³

The war had created a unique opportunity for the Gospel of the Kingdom of Christ.

Recognising that in the providence of God an unprecedented gravity of demeanour and seriousness of purpose has been created throughout the nation by the great war, we believe that the people everywhere are strongly susceptible to a Gospel which emphasises the reality and supremacy of the Spiritual Kingdom....⁴

There is no way of knowing whether or not any significant upsurge in religiosity occurred in the early days of the war. Marrin asserts of the British Army:

There are...indications, impressionistic rather than statistical in nature, that the territorial forces and those responding to Kitchener's call in the first period of the war were more attentive to religion than the mass armies of the second half of the war.⁵

This implies that those who had voluntarily enlisted from idealistic motives were more susceptible to religious influences than later conscripts. Such an assertion may have been true of early volunteers for the N.Z.E.F. too, but it is highly unlikely. If there is any truth at all in Marrin's conclusion (and it is doubtful), it could be reversed just as plausibly, and with a greater degree of probability; the volunteers tended to enlist because they had already been moved by religious influences. The word "impressionistic" should lead to caution anyway; what caused this "impression" is not stated, and a considerable amount of wishful thinking seems to be one likely explanation. Moreover, there is a

moralistic assumption involved (probably not on Marrin's part, but directly from his source) that only a certain type of spirit, open to "higher" and "nobler" rather than "lower" and "baser" motives, would ever have volunteered. This simply reflects the contemporary religious belief that the refusal of the pleasure-seekers to do their duty by volunteering had created the necessity for conscription.⁶ It is, of course, hardly amenable to statistical analysis. Moreover, as always, volunteers for the war would have had plenty of motives, temporal and opportunistic as well as idealistic, for enlisting.

In fact, Mindy Chen's work on the Otago Division suggests that religion was not of great importance in the first patriotic wave of voluntary enlistments.⁷ The main attraction seems to have been the chance "...[to have] some fun and [be] in on the biggest event in history."⁸ Patriotic and imperialistic sentiment followed closely behind; there was a keenness to 'do their bit' in a worthwhile cause, and

...to be a soldier fighting for right against wrong commanded the respect, admiration and approval of a society whose emphasis was strongly placed on patriotism to King and Country.⁹

Conversely, not to fight was a grave dishonour, calling into question a young man's manhood, and the Church participated in placing communal pressure on those who did not volunteer.

Most significantly, though, any tendency to believe that the war had created or strengthened the religious spirit soon proved to be erroneous. Within a year, Methodists realised that no such spontaneous awakening had occurred - or rather, as they believed, that the awakening had been merely temporary and shallow. W.J. Williams, advertising an evangelistic "campaign" instituted by the 1915 Conference,

noted:

It may and will be urged by some that this terrible obsession of the war in the public mind will render nugatory any attempt to arouse any widespread interest in spiritual things.¹⁰

This was a rather curious statement if the war had caused a spiritual awakening. Williams felt, nevertheless, that revival should occur:

No doubt the stress of sorrow, anxiety and trouble ought to predispose people to seek God's face and give heed to the message of eternal life. At any rate it may well constitute a ground for special appeal in striking the evangelistic note. It can never be forgotten that some of those wonderful revivals that marked the early history of Methodism took place during those long and distressful years of war that found their climax at Waterloo.¹¹

But it was soon clear that revival was not occurring.

...church attendance...[is] now even lower than in the pre-war period. The question may well be asked, "Is the Church doing all it can to meet the needs of the times?"¹²

The truth was that the war had not affected the pre-war situation.

So if revival would not happen spontaneously, the Church would have to create it. This, of course, had been the position facing Methodism since the middle of the nineteenth century. With rare exceptions, a revival was no longer

...unstructured, spontaneous and eagerly awaited as a gracious outpouring of God's spirit, 'a shower of blessing' whose only human predeterminant was intensive and prolonged prayer on the part of penitent churchmen that [it] would be in fact vouchsafed.¹³

It was still "eagerly awaited as a gracious outpouring of God's spirit", but it had become a series of meetings professionally promoted and conducted; certain methods would necessarily invoke God's blessing and enable expectant believers to 'get up a revival'. Among other things, "...it

involved the young, increased the membership and revitalised the lackadaisical."¹⁴ Thus revival increasingly became a means of maintaining the spirituality of the Church itself; in other words, it was the favourite method of leading those in connection with the Church to holiness.

This method of leading the believers to holiness created its own problems. It was an "instant" kind of holiness, and therefore subject to the vicissitudes of emotion and the perils of emotionalism. Moreover, this emotionalism tended to dilute denominational loyalties; "...enthusiasts for revival were less loyal to Methodism than they were to their desire for experience, which often led them in non-Wesleyan paths."¹⁵ This had, as "ranterism", created the Primitive Methodist and Bible Christian denominations; but in New Zealand, only the Primitives pursued revivalism to any great extent, apart from individual preachers like Rev W. Ready. Revivalists thus tended to be visiting preachers, usually from outside Methodism, which only exacerbated the problems of denominational loyalty and of ordered respectability within circuits. Increasingly, Methodists regarded respectability as an essential precondition of revival; but revival needed enthusiasm more than respectability, and so became very rare.

Why then, had Methodism succeeded in the pioneering society? The answer is not to be found in an early revivalism which was lost later. The socially divisive tendencies of sectarian revivalism were in fact a nuisance in the pioneering society.

The experiment of building a settler society against a series of exterior threats,...and the constant struggle to tame the land and build viable communities created a society where the co-operative

principle was all-important. There was the strongest social pressure for everyone to work together.¹⁶

This tended to lead to the subordination of denominationalism to the practicalities of the situation; time and money were in short supply, and these problems meant that settlers would do little more than "help to build a chapel and support a minister". Religion was important to them, and a chapel with its minister was the basis of the religion that they had known in Britain.

The new arrivals were bewildered and lost for a time. [...] For great numbers the chapel was something familiar in an alien land, a part of the old life transferred. It could be run up in a fortnight by the settlers themselves. [...] Here they gathered to sing the hymns they knew, to hear the Word of God, and to listen to a homely Gospel that spoke of the changeless love of their Father.¹⁷

Sectarian enthusiasm was not essential to their religion, so it was shunned as being dangerously unnecessary.

In a study which provides some useful comparison, Eric Clancy has found that Methodism succeeded in rural New South Wales after the first third of the nineteenth century through six factors:

...the unremitting activity of laymen; the constant pressure put on the church leaders by laymen; the application of the connexional system to pioneering situations; the aggressive labours of pioneer ministers; the evangelistic thrust of the church; [and] the central message of Methodism.¹⁸

There is perhaps a degree of enthusiastic triumphalism here; Clancy does not examine or suggest any other, perhaps more mundane, factors that might have favoured Methodism over other religious organisations. But there is no doubt that Methodism was very well adapted to the needs of the New Zealand pioneering situation, for similar reasons. Because it did not depend, at least initially, on a tight ecclesiastical parochial structure centred on large

buildings, it could adjust comparatively easily to the pattern of settlement; thus it was often the first ecclesiastical arrival in a new settlement, with the machinery to provide sufficient spiritual ministration when there was no alternative to cheapness.¹⁹

...the great majority of those who came to New Zealand were humble folk who were determined to better their position. [...] Methodism flourished in the nineteenth century because it spoke to such people in a language they understood.... [...] It was cheap and unpretentious, it was democratic, and it held a large do-it-yourself element which developed the capacity of the members.²⁰

Moreover, along with the pastoral oversight of a connexional system came the financial assistance which enabled difficult causes to be maintained and made secure. The Wesleyan Church Extension Fund was established in 1855 "with a view to entering newly-settled areas",²¹ the Church Building and Loan Fund in 1883 "...to assist the purchase of church sites, the erection of substantial churches, the provision of parsonages and the liquidation of debts."²² Helen Foy summarises well the advantages of this system:

...the Connexional System was rigid in some aspects of its structure, but flexible in others. Its hierarchical organisation was intended to help rather than hinder individual circuits, and also to facilitate national administration. Although Conference remained in strict control, public participation was essential at grass roots level. [...] ...because the system was able to adapt [in a new land] without completely altering its structure, it enabled individual churches ...to keep going even in very difficult periods and to prosper when times were good.²³

But while these developments were very significant in New Zealand Methodism's attempt to adapt to the emerging New Zealand society, the very desire to root itself in New Zealand life led Methodism away from an evangelistic to a reformist approach to society. Respectability became

increasingly important in the late nineteenth century, and Methodists sought ways to retain their conversionist fervour without undermining the stability of the community which they were trying to influence for the better. In this situation, prohibition emerged in the 1880's as an alternative deployment of Methodist zeal which was more acceptable to the community (yet still divisive enough). In the following thirty years till World War I, prohibitionism became the Church's major collective presence in New Zealand society.²⁴

The increasing concentration on prohibitionism did not entirely displace Methodist belief in the need for evangelism. But the increasing importance of respectability was reflected in the evangelism that won the approval of Wesleyans at the turn of the century. The first Wesleyan connexional evangelist was a New Zealand minister, Rev Joseph S. Smalley,²⁵ appointed in 1886. Many overseas evangelists followed between then and World War I, winning Methodist approval, including the leading revivalists R.A. Torrey (in 1902) and J. Wilbur Chapman (in 1912). Others were employed by the Wesleyans, and the united Church held a Mission of Inspiration and Appeal in 1913, led by three overseas evangelists. Methodists required that evangelists demonstrate concern for respectability and order; but in the case of the very popular missionary of 1913, Rev Val Trigge, this was supplemented by a fervid winsomeness, and Trigge returned in 1916 for five years of about twenty circuit missions per year, each lasting eleven days.

Such methods did not lead to great revivals, however.²⁶ Trigge's return in 1916 did not prevent disturbing statistical returns in 1917; membership had risen slightly,

but the returns for scholars and worshippers had fallen considerably.²⁷ The Welfare of the Church Committee expressed great concern.

...the spiritual condition of New Zealand Methodism is such as to demand the faithful and searching consideration of Conference. Without yielding either to panic or pessimism we cannot but recognise many evidences of slackness and decline, which if not arrested and overcome, must in course of time, seriously endanger our very existence as a Church.

Amongst disquietening [sic] signs we note much of "the form of Godliness without the power," a Church-membership which exists in name only, spiritual slackness and the habitual or frequent neglect of the Lord's Supper on the part of many; the rarity of conversions, and the growing gap between the Church and the community. Many of our ministers are conscious of the need of a fresh vision, and a renewal of that spiritual force and fire which alone can render their ministry effective.²⁸

This was not the first time that such sentiments had been expressed at the connexional level, but it seems to have been a turning point. The expected wartime revival had not happened; the Methodist Church still faced all the problems it had faced before the war; and in addition, the war laid on the Church the pressing burden of a new age which had almost arrived, and which demanded major new responses from the Church. Methodism had reached a crisis.

2. Revival and the New Age

The problem facing Methodists in 1917 was not that the age made the outbreak of revival difficult or impossible. Charged with the continuing optimism that looked beyond one defeat to the next opportunity, Methodists were utterly convinced that people needed and were looking for God. They always believed this, of course, but people's need of spiritual consolation in wartime was seen as more acute, and so revival was expected. Here was the operation of an

endless hope among Methodists. Revival had unavailingly been expected at the start of the war; but Methodists believed that its non-appearance was due to the Church's failure to do everything possible to ensure its occurrence. There were difficulties and obstacles to overcome; but Methodists were convinced of the reality of the underlying spiritual need, and their task was to bring that need to the surface. Firstly, however, they had to discover how they were to do this.

The opportunity that the new situation presented to Methodists was thus expressed by a leading layman, H.D. Bedford, M.H.R.:

The war is transforming the face of things. It is testing the quality of opinions and institutions as by fire. It is laying new obligations upon men and organisations. It is opening up new problems and laying new emphasis upon old ones. The question is in what way is the Church to be affected? War brings sorrow and drives men to the consolations of religion. It rebukes levity by confronting men with the stern things of life, and this will deepen the spirituality of the nation. The Cross of Christ will be the biggest and most luminous thing standing out upon the horizon when the day of peace dawns. The war is preparing the conditions which will present the Church with an opportunity unsurpassed for instilling the spirit of the Divine Healer during the convalescence of the nations.²⁹

But the war itself would not create a revival, as Trigge told the 1917 Conference:

... nothing produces a true religious revival except prayer with confession; a heeding of God's word; and such a consecration of God's people as will allow the Holy Spirit to work His Pentecostal wonders. ³⁰

Trigge believed that an Allied victory would not have the best impact unless it was preceded by a great revival, and God intended that the Methodist Conference should be instrumental in securing it. But the Church itself had to be ready if revival was to come.

...the greatest need of our Church is a Spirit inspired revival that will roll like a huge tidal wave of Spiritual life from one end of the country to the other, for from the Day of Pentecost until this hour it has taken the extraordinary, the astounding, the amazing, the astonishing, to wake this old world up. Nothing else will save the churches, nothing else will save the world, nothing else will deliver us in this age of compromise, nothing else will save us from the pleasure-seeking, time-serving, ease-loving spirit which abounds, nothing else will kill the indifference and laziness that has got into the Church, ...will fill with courage and make us willing to go through with God, cost what it may. Nothing else will meet the stupendous need in this supreme crisis in the world's history. If we do not get it, as a Church we are gone.³¹

Trigge criticised the formalism of the Church, and pleaded for aggressive evangelism led by office-holders who were "filled with the Holy Spirit".

But if the war could not produce a revival, it could create the preconditions of a revival, and Methodists indulged in some speculation concerning these preconditions. Rev C.H. Laws believed that competence and candour would be required in the speech and conduct of all public men, including preachers. People in the new age, especially the returned soldiers, would be seeking only plainly spoken truth.³² Methodists were keenly aware of the willing and valorous self-sacrifices of the soldiers,³³ and whether or not they viewed such sacrifices as having religious merit in themselves, their attitude to their beliefs was affected by the attitudes to religion and life displayed by the soldiers at the front.

On this issue, there was much confusion among Methodists, partly created by their own expectations. Methodists expected that when the soldiers were confronted by the stern realities of life and death as they approached the front, they would abandon their carelessness and treat

religion seriously. Thus they awaited a revival of religion among the soldiers at the front. Leaving aside for the moment the question of the actual attitude of the soldiers to religion and to the Christian Church, it is necessary to examine the reports that filtered back to New Zealand in order to discover what Methodists believed to be happening at the front. These beliefs were important in determining the views that Methodists developed of the message that would be necessary in the new post-war age.

On one side, there were reports of conversions and revivals, mostly from chaplains. These occurred at all stages of army life, from the training camps in New Zealand to the front. A few examples will suffice to demonstrate the sort of effect that Methodist chaplains sought and worked for. Chaplain Harold T. Peat³⁴ related a 'typical' experience at a training camp.

In his padre's room, Private _____ confessed Christ and said to me, "Padre, I'll play the clean game, but how can I show my coppers which side I'm on, for I've gone the pace?" "Get down on your knees in your hut to-night", I said, "for that will be testimony as well as prayer." Two days later he recounted his experience. As he knelt in the hut his mind had been a blank, he could think of nothing to pray about, for were not his mates watching him? I suggested that that was the most eloquent prayer of his life. "Then," he continued, "a fellow lifted his tunic to throw it over my head, whereupon the roughest fellow in the hut caught the offender by the arm, saying, "You blighter, if you throw that I'll break your neck; that fellow has more pluck than any of us.""³⁵

Nearness to the front seemed to make soldiers quieter and more receptive to religion. The report of an agent of the British Endeavour Union included the sort of thing that Methodists wanted to hear.

"Wednesday was a day of victory, and about twenty men surrendered to Christ." The next day "thirty made their decision for Christ." The next day again

"forty-five men yielded to the Saviour, twenty others entered their names for prayer." This man says that God has promised him a thousand precious souls to be won on the battlefield, and he is setting every convert to win his comrades in the camps and trenches, and they are doing it. One soldier going out for the third time had a shot go right through his Testament. God used that to lead him to make his decision for Christ. One letter tells of four men deciding for Christ in the trenches. And a pathetic note is often struck in his reports. This for instance: "Just heard from the front that five men made their decision for Christ before going to the trenches. Not a man of the five has returned." [...] One wounded lad said he never knew what it was to pray. He had learnt to say his prayers, but he never prayed till the day of the battle at the Aisne. Then, he said, "the whole regiment seemed to be praying. I know I was praying, and somehow I felt better, and I've prayed ever since." [...] A wounded soldier said: "My mates used to tell men in barracks that they were infidels - they did not believe in God - but after their experiences in the trenches they have lost their infidelity. They pray now. There are no infidels in the trenches."³⁶

It should be noted that army life had its trials for men wishing to practise their religion; the greatest danger was 'the tendency to lower the ethical standard', in view of the availability of drink and the influence of bad men: 'The man who [is] too weak to take a firm stand the first night in camp [has] a poor chance of getting through all right.'³⁷ Most young Methodists coped with the pressures well enough, although some succumbed. For the chaplains, a particular concern was to ensure that the soldiers did not abandon their previously clean lives. The social evils of Cairo was a popular topic of addresses.³⁸ However, army life presented such a major evangelistic opportunity that the consequences of poor chaplaincy were held to be disastrous. Chaplain Sadlier (the Anglican Bishop of Nelson)³⁹ expressed this in terms of both the chaplain's own standing before God and the future work of the church.

..."The opportunity is so great that the chaplain who does not make good now, will yet have cause to

tremble before the Judge of all the Earth." 40

..."To be a chaplain gives a man a splendid opportunity. In fact this is the Church's great chance. If she fails now she will greatly suffer in days to come. She is passing through a great testing time, and it is as imperative that she should rise to the great occasion." 41

But there was another side to this issue; some held that there was no revival at the front, certainly not in terms that the Churches at home would understand. Naturally, little evidence of failure in this area filtered through to New Zealand Methodists; censorship reinforced the inclination to put the best possible interpretation on all developments at the front. This inclination is evidenced by a chaplain who, forced to admit that the soldiers lacked a 'passionate desire for religion', countered by asserting that the soldiers were religious, but in an unusual way.

Unconsciously the soldier's viewpoint has been changed. The instability of the material has given him a new conception of the vital realities of religion. But his conception is unconventional and shy of expressing itself. In outward habit he is not in the least like a conventional churchgoer. You scan his life in vain for the usual marks and signs. It is a conception that has to be ministered to in other than the ordinary church ways, but a real effective thing for all that. It does not make him fond of tracts or prayer meetings; but it inspires chivalry and sympathy and thoughtfulness, and a self-sacrifice undreamt of before the war. Now, accepting these things as symbols of the great change, I firmly believe that God is revealing Himself to multitudes of our fighting men. 42

Others could be blunt. A British soldier commented on the religion of those in his regiment. Most had come from the larger cities, where they had been 'brought up pretty rough'. Despite contact with the Church in their childhood, most were unreligious, and attending church left no lasting impression. They were tolerantly intrigued by a religious man, but suspected superior assumptions in him, and were often disappointed in his behaviour.

We have two commandments, which are: 'Play the game', and 'Stand up for your pals'. [....] ...if [a fellow who goes in for religion] is a decent chap and keeps our two commandments as well or better than the rest of us, we have a certain respect for him, and perhaps a little envy.⁴³

Combining these conflicting impressions, it was clear that the soldier was not entirely immune to religious influences; but if his "religion" was 'unconventional', the Church would have to make adjustments if it was to win him and hold him both during and after the war. Chaplain Alexander Allen (killed in 1918)⁴⁴ expressed the essence of the needed changes. All the reforms for which he and other churchmen, both at the front and at home, called stemmed from his reflection: 'Religion as an abstract theological thing is not popular with the Army....'⁴⁵ Christianity was not a theory to be preached, but a fact to be lived.

It is strange to find religion robbed of all its church, choir, organ atmosphere. In the new dress of service conditions it is the bare thing that must live - no gaslit and gas-inspired Christianity here, but a Christianity which lives by virtue of its own inherent power, shown, as in the first days, through a man.⁴⁶

The ordinary New Zealander seemed to need a religion that was more tangible and practical; simplicity and brotherhood were the two things that he seemed to require from the Church.

A widespread feeling grew during the war the the Church had become mired in all sorts of doubts concerning the message to be preached and the manner of preaching it. Thus Methodists sought a simplification of their evangelical message, and a regained certainty in proclaiming it.

We must secure a more simple and direct statement of the truth we preach. Simplicity and purity of doctrine!

We shall have to get rid of elaborate theories of doctrinal truth and possess ourselves of power in

teaching the outstanding essential facts of revelation. The message of every witness must become as simple and as stern as our necessities. Every doctrine will have to be brought to the touchstone of reality.⁴⁷

The number of quotations repeating this sentiment could be vastly multiplied, so strongly did Methodists believe in the necessity of this. The replacement of the old evangelicalism by liberal theology had left a situation where many ministers no longer believed in many doctrines that the Church had long taught. Judging by the regular rebukes delivered against preaching doctrines and views that the preacher himself did not hold or was uncertain about, the practice was thought to be fairly common before World War I. Indeed the transition was achieved with remarkably little disruption within New Zealand Methodism, mainly because Methodist preachers felt that there was a group of basic evangelical doctrines which biblical criticism had influenced rather than destroyed. So while Methodist preachers, with caution, welcomed the new insights resulting from biblical criticism and liberal theology, they combined them with the aspects of the old evangelicalism that they still found acceptable. Thus it is perhaps permissible to speak of an "evangelical liberalism".

How easy the victory of evangelical liberalism was within New Zealand Methodism may be gauged from the fact that there was only one controversy of any significance on the subject. In 1893, Rev C.H. Garland delivered the semi-official Conference lecture to the Wesleyan Conference on the bearing of the German higher criticism on the inspiration and authority of the Bible. This caused a minor storm. A leading British layman who had settled in New Zealand, William Shepherd Allen, attacked his views in a pamphlet, and

Garland replied in kind.⁴⁸ One other man, Rev D. McNicoll, joined the fray on Allen's side. But the controversy went no further, owing to three factors. Firstly, Rev Paul Fairclough, the new editor of the Wesleyan journal, refused to accept correspondence on the matter. (It would have been intriguing to assess lay, and even clerical, reactions had correspondence been permitted.) Secondly, despite McNicoll, no split in the clerical ranks appears to have been involved. The Methodist ministers accepted the late nineteenth century liberalism fairly readily. Thirdly, the cultured Garland, like the scholarly British Primitive tutor, A.S. Peake, retained a warm evangelical fervour, which helped to reconcile others to the new kind of thought that he and other ministers propagated.

Fundamental to evangelical liberalism was the belief that human understanding of truth was dynamic, not static; changing understanding meant a progressive evolution of ideas towards a kind of ideological "golden age". Moreover, not only human understanding, but also divine revelation itself, was progressive. This progressive revelation, however, had culminated in the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, whereas human understanding of this revelation was still progressing. Rev C.H. Laws could assert that

...in the history of doctrine within the Church, theological truth has never been a fixed and unchangeable thing. The great verities abide through all fluctuations of thought, and the Evangel is timeless in its mighty appeal. 49

This progressive human understanding, however, was available to the world as well as the Church; Methodists believed that it was quite possible for the Church to be a reactionary influence in the march towards the kingdom of heaven on

earth. Laws noted sadly that '...in almost every age the Christian Church, or her representative men, has taken the wrong attitude to the growing light of the world.'⁵⁰ Working from such assumptions, Laws believed that after the war,

The Christian Church will be asked to silence her discords, to cease her babel of contending schools, to utter her message without equivocation and concealment, and to produce her credentials in a way convincing to the modern mind. She will be required to state what precise truth she holds by revelation as distinct from human research, in what exact sense she holds the Bible to be the Word of God, how far she can really prove the Gospels to be dependable history, what her doctrine of the divinity and authority of Jesus Christ really is, and what she knows with certainty of the Great Beyond?⁵¹

These were the points at which liberal theology was making the most serious inroads on the old evangelicalism. Such pressures led to calls for a restatement of Methodist doctrine. Methodist preachers had long wanted this, but the war increased their conviction that the old evangelicalism was not reaching the ordinary New Zealander, as represented by the soldier. Rev Arthur Liversedge maintained:⁵²

Doctrinal reconstruction is inevitable to-day, whether we want it or not. An enlarged "experience" is bringing the Church new light from God-light on the Atonement, Prayer, Sacraments, Brotherhood, Zeal, the Future, Church Unity, etc. Shall we close our eyes as a community, or rejoice that we are so free to absorb the new material into our life and express it in our theology?⁵³

Chaplain Leslie B. Neale⁵⁴ boldly uttered what he (and Methodist preachers generally) thought to be the soldiers' requirements of the message of the Church:

Christian thought has not suddenly sprung into being...always it has been divinely progressive. That progression must be honoured today by a re-statement of our position.

Some still cling to the superficial thought and the barren theological subtleties of other days, some casebound themselves in traditional dogmas and antiquated theories, whilst others speak in conventional language, which wearies and irritates

those who listen.

The great blight upon Evangelicalism is its obscurantism. Have we frankly recognised the discoveries made in the realm of Biblical and historical criticism?

We men on service call to the Church, for our sake, to be courageously progressive. If the ecclesiastical layman chooses to be shocked by this progression, he must be shocked. The Church does not alone exist for him; where it does it is no Church, but merely an antiquarian curiosity.

The fear that truth will die, like an invalid, of any change, is lack of faith in the power of truth. Truth lives on growth, adventure and discovery, when these things cease it ceases to be itself.

A church anxious to preserve the truth as it were some flickering light in a high wind seems to have no truth worth preserving. Those who convince others that they have truth do so by their own eagerness to discover it, and it is just that eagerness which gives life and unity to faith.

The mental forms in which we express belief are bound to change. [....] Every age must have its new theology or its peculiar interpretation of the Gospel. We cannot afford to make Luther, Calvin or Wesley the limit of faith.⁵⁵

From such an insight, Neale expressed his hope for a successful Church of the future:

A restatement of our ecclesiastical position combined with a vigorous forward movement would revive waning enthusiasm and hope and retain for the service of the Church thousands of men in khaki. The great masses of men are not hostile to religion. They love Christianity but hate "Churchianity." Many embrace an inarticulate faith that intolerates [sic] conventionalism, conformity, and esoteric jargon. They feel a man can be a scientist, a higher critic, an evolutionist, believe in the later date of the Pentateuch, the dual authorship of Isaiah and yet be Christian.⁵⁶

Here Neale succinctly expressed the evangelical liberalism of Methodist preachers of this era. They were convinced that a restatement of the Gospel would replace outdated theological dogmas with a frank recognition of the results of scientific biblical study; this restatement, however, would not touch the vital evangelical truths of the

Gospel, and therefore Methodists could still press their evangelistic applications of this Gospel with confidence. With conviction, Liversedge could add to his claim of the need of doctrinal reconstruction:

Methodism does not place the same value on all traditional doctrines. If a man is sound on "Human Depravity, the Divinity and Atonement of Christ, the Influence and Witness of the Holy Spirit and Christian Holiness," he may be an officer in Methodism—even though his views on other subjects may differ from those commonly accepted. In doctrine, as in its conception of the Church, Methodism is both evangelical and catholic....⁵⁷

Some understanding of the evangelical side of this evangelical liberalism can be gained from a sermon preached by Rev Harry Ranston on the Methodist Church's attitude to the future,⁵⁸ in which he argued lengthily for the imperative necessity of a much enlarged conception of God.

Nothing less than the New Testament conception of God as Infinite in every great and holy quality, can produce a religion which is deep and virile, sufficient for all our needs. A great religious experience imperatively calls for a Great God to begin with. Superficial conceptions of the Divine mean nothing other than a weak and emasculated spiritual life. A great, strong, effective religion cannot be based upon small ideas of Deity. [....] ...we need... a God boundless in every great attribute, without a single trace of human weakness or imperfection.⁵⁹

The practical acknowledgement of such a God would replace religious trifling with utter earnestness. This would lead to an increased concentration on 'the things that really matter.'

Amidst all the changes which have taken place in the world in the course of the centuries the human heart, in its fundamental needs, has never changed. It still needs the regeneration of God in Christ; the strength to unseat the indwelling power of sin; the energy to rise superior to the down-dragging weight of an ever-present materialism; the clear vision of duty and the power to do it once it is seen; and the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁰

The Church would mean more to the outsider by taking these things seriously and accepting its 'high calling as the messenger of Jesus Christ.'

A church is...nothing less than the body of Christ, the instrument of God in the bringing in of his kingdom, with an imperative message from the Living God to declare to all; with Divine truth to proclaim so urgently needed that human life without it is irretrievably ruined.⁶¹

Ranston dismissed the fears and doubts concerning the Church's future as a consequence of the lack of faith in a God great enough to meet all needs; the Church was thus trying to fulfil its mission without depending on God.

Ranston could justly cite the examples of the Apostle Paul and John Wesley in affirming the potency of a religious faith based on such a view of God; this was the evangelical certainty that would make Methodist preaching effective in the new age. Armed with such certainty, Methodists were to be faced by returned soldiers whose nearness to the realities of life and death would render them open to nothing in religion but the foundational certainties, simply and directly expressed; so the Church had to learn how to state truth with simplicity, clarity, directness, and conviction. These steps were believed to be absolutely vital to success among the soldiers; yet in themselves, they were still not sufficient to ensure the Church's advance in the new age.

All preaching had to aim at the hearer's definite conversion to Jesus Christ.

The Church is failing if she is not winning converts. And noble as it is to hold her own young people, that alone cannot satisfy her Lord. She should measure her strength and spiritual effectiveness by the impact she makes on the world without.⁶²

For Laws,

...Evangelism, the calling of men to God, the

gathering of them into discipleship, the presentation to them of the possibilities of Christian character, is the supreme work of the Church. This is the rich full Gospel which she is commissioned to preach.⁶³

Recognising this, the failure to secure converts was a terrible indictment; the Anglican Bishop of Chelmsford's blunt appraisal of the reasons struck at Methodist consciences.

There is a dearth of conversions. Why? The result of higher criticism, says one. The growth of ritualism, says another. While a third replies: "The social condition of the people." Brethren, do not let us excuse ourselves. The dearth of conversions is owing to none of these things. How many in this church had a conversion that he knew about last Sunday? How many conversions did you know about last year? It is all very well to talk about the silent growth, but even a Lydia is known sometimes. What about the drunkards in your parishes? How many were saved last year? If Evangelicals cannot save drunkards, harlots and prostitutes [sic!] then I say there is something wrong with Evangelicals, and the sooner we find out what it is the better. Some would say it is our surpliced choir and semi-musical services. It is not, for I have known good soul-saving work done under these conditions, and deadness and coldness elsewhere.

The cause is deeper down than that. We have ceased to regard sin as our fathers did. We have discarded hell. We have not kept in the Cross. We have not had a personal experience of sanctification, and we have lost the power of the Spirit.⁶⁴

The needs of the soldiers was again potentially a strong motivating factor. Rev William Walker, on returning from front-line chaplaincy, confessed that working among the soldiers had greatly increased his sense of the value of the Communion Service, and of the encouragement he had received in 'making a direct appeal for decision' at the end of each address. Commenting on this, W.J. Williams hoped that preachers would not forget

...the way in which he sought to apply his own experience by urging that a similar appeal for decision should be a feature in all our preaching services. The note of urgency with regard to religious decision is needed elsewhere as well as

amid the boom of guns and the crash of shells on the field of battle.⁶⁵

Allied to this dearth of conversions was a pharisaical spirit within the Church. The criticisms of the soldiers were influential in this respect, especially through the mediation of Donald Hankey's A Student in Arms.⁶⁶ Rev W.A. Sinclair (the 1917 President) maintained that

...religion tends to become formal, conventional, and self-centred. There is ever present within us the danger of developing the Pharisaical spirit which is the corruption of true religion. We must always be on our guard against this. We must awaken from self-satisfied indifference and get back to the simplicities and realities of Christ and true religion.⁶⁷

Sinclair grieved at the way in which the Church had given the world a wrong impression of Christianity: 'We have made religion appear to be a thing of prohibitions and condemnations....'⁶⁸ Jesus had in fact condemned mostly the 'self-righteous religionists' of his time, and had 'mingled freely with social outcasts' in order '...to seek and save the lost. He came to pull down, but also specially to build up.'⁶⁹ Thus Sinclair discovered the seeds of a more attractive religion.

We associate the Christian with the negative rather than the positive. Christ came to emphasise the positive. In the Old Testament we have prohibitions, but in the New Testament we have inspirations; in the Old we have restraint, but in the New we have constraint; in the Old we have law, but in the New we have love. In the Old we have the words, "Thou shalt not," but in the New we listen to another voice which says, "Be ye holy; be ye perfect; blessed are the meek, blessed are the merciful, blessed are the pure in heart, blessed are the peace-makers; a new commandment give I unto you, that ye love." We need a religion with more warmth, greater friendliness, less conventionality, and truer brotherliness. We need more sweetness in our righteousness, more beauty and winsomeness in our holiness, more charity in our judgments, and more humanity in our divinity.⁷⁰

The examination of the kind of ideas that Methodists

believed that religion should encompass benefits from Michael McKernan's useful account of a young Australian Methodist, Chaplain F.B. Fletcher, who underwent a complete conversion to a position which allowed him to admire what the soldiers of the Australian Imperial Forces stood for.⁷¹ Fletcher recognised that

...the majority of the troops transgressed the church's prohibition of drinking, swearing and gambling.... However, he refused to believe in the wholesale damnation of men who, eagerly and willingly, accepted death in order to rid the world of the greatest menace to Christianity.⁷²

He believed that "The Australians had seen through the petty and grasped the broader principles of brotherhood."⁷³ Not only did they reject international and religious "'quarrels'", but they

...had thrown off institutional Christianity with its emphasis on precept and command and had rediscovered primitive Christianity whose supreme law was the law of love. ⁷⁴

In agreeing with them, Fletcher "...now rejected the right of the church to determine what was necessary for salvation...."⁷⁵

McKernan rightly points out: "The A.I.F. view marked a significant departure from the standards of Australian Christianity."⁷⁶ The New Zealand soldiers seem to have held the same views on religion, but Methodist support for such views was by no means found only among chaplains. The soldiers' views were only the development in a particular situation of views that had long been current, at least among Methodists. Methodist views of "the brotherhood of man" will be examined in greater detail in the next chapter, but the influence of the soldiers' spirit in the war made some significant inroads on the Methodist outlook on the world. Sinclair admitted:

Judged by conventional standards our soldiers are not very religious. The religion of the Churches is not the religion of the trenches, and yet there may be more religion in the trenches than in the Churches. Many in our Churches are selfish and bitter and unforgiving and intolerant and uncharitable and ill-tempered, while the men in the trenches as a whole are unselfish and cheerful and generous and charitable and brotherly and self-sacrificing. There is much religion outside the Churches that does not flow in conventional channels and that does not find expression in Church attendance.⁷⁷

From such a standard, Sinclair claimed that '...we must lay less emphasis on orthodoxy, and more on life and conduct, or character and spirit.'⁷⁸ This meant, in particular, a new emphasis on right relationships with others. The sacrificial love of Christ's Cross was needed to 'revolutionise society'.

Wesley's doctrine of perfect love must be preached to-day with special emphasis on love to our neighbour. The Christian is a brother and he must live and act accordingly. Religion means love and brotherliness. We have just as much religion as we have love, a love that expresses itself in sacrifice and service and unselfishness and brotherliness.⁷⁹

Thus Sinclair could urge:

What is needed today is not so much a restatement of doctrine in the light of modern knowledge - although that is urgently required, but a new attitude to others, a new spirit in our relationship to each other.⁸⁰

This 'new attitude' and 'new spirit', however, had an effect on Methodist theology. Theology had to be reshaped, it was believed, to service this religion of practical unselfishness. This practical unselfishness was most clearly seen in the largely unreligious soldiers, and so Methodists were forced to recognise that

...a man, outwardly irreligious, was capable of performing good and even heroically unselfish acts. Since [most of them] believed that religion provided the only basis for the exercise of these virtues, they needed to reconcile these apparently contradictory facets of character.⁸¹

Sinclair contended that Augustine's theory of the total

depravity of human nature, with its 'inherent badness...and the utter absence of any good', was not correct, since human nature clearly contained within itself much latent goodness. Christ's method was to emphasise and appeal to the good in individuals, thus bringing out the best in them.

Attempts like this to revise Methodist orthodoxy demonstrate graphically the crisis of confidence in the old evangelicalism. The alleged indifference in the Church seemed to have become so widespread that a correspondent could quote a certain Norman McLean's contention approvingly: "Heterodoxy on fire is infinitely preferable to orthodoxy on ice." But this simply meant switching from one extreme to the other. The confusion resulted from the inability to separate the unearthly cause of God and the temporal cause of Britain. Augustine's view of human nature was a theological construction which the demonstration of the best and worst features of the "lower nature" (to use the Apostle Paul's phrase) did not alter or threaten. Only when the Kingdom of God became sufficiently equated with a temporal bliss to be attained by temporal methods could the "incipient religion" of the "lower nature", which many Australian Protestant chaplains discerned in the soldiers, be treated as equally blessed in the eyes of God with the religion of the "higher nature", or traditional Christianity. It is interesting that the sacramentalist tradition succeeded among the troops where the evangelical tradition failed; "symbols", representing and emphasising the Church, were effective where "the fine eye of faith" did not stand the test. The Catholics were sure of the necessity of their Church for salvation; the Protestants had lost a similar certainty regarding their

denominations.⁸⁸

It was of great, but unrecognised significance that the Christchurch Reconstruction Committee discovered a lack of commitment and loyalty to the Methodist Church among its members. This committee had been appointed by the Christchurch Methodist Ministers' Association

...[to institute] an inquiry into the state of Methodist Church life in New Zealand. Their purpose was twofold, firstly, to ascertain what corporate defects or weaknesses existed; and secondly, to seek for a corporate remedy.⁸⁹

It is highly suggestive that such an inquiry should have been instituted in late 1917; this is a clear indication of the development of a newly accentuated lack of confidence in Methodism's future as a Church. The problem of fellowship was crucial, and particularly galling, in this development.

The class meeting has been described by Dr Workman as the germ cell of Methodism. Our correspondents recognise that the fellowship system of our Church has "largely broken down," and no substitute has been found. With diminished spiritual vitality comes a pitiful lack of brotherliness, and a deplorable growth of unscriptural individualism. Whatever may be the future of the class meeting, the necessity for fellowship must be recognised. At all costs that corporate sense of spiritual oneness which the class meeting fostered must somehow be preserved - or the Methodist Church will lose its soul.⁹⁰

The Committee recognised that contemporary Methodism had lost its sense of churchmanship; this could be and needed to be restored before any renewal of Methodism could occur.

Today, when Methodists speak, not of a mere "Society," but of their "Church", they have ceased to be churchmen, and have become individualists, ready to forsake their church for a fancied slight, or a passing whim. ...the only way to re-invigorate our Church is to restore to her people the lost Church consciousness, and give to them a Church ideal in which they can glory.

[....] Methodism is Christianity as it was experienced and understood by John Wesley and his followers. It is the soul of the Methodist Church.

And the Church is in real danger of losing its soul. It does not preach insistently, as did Paul and Wesley, the "necessity" of that Church which is the veritable Body of Christ in the world. It does not claim, as it ought, that every group of believers in Christ, united for worship and service, is, or might be, a Body of Christ. Our Church teaching is lamentably defective - a radical defect, which explains and accounts for, in great measure, those weaknesses we deplore.⁹¹

The answer lay in the recognition that:

...while John Wesley fashioned the Methodist Church, the Spirit of God created its soul-created Methodism, which is the essential spirit of Christianity. To Wesley the Methodist spirit - or experience - was of more importance than all forms, whether forms of doctrine or form of government. It was capable indeed of creating its own forms, and was able to use those already in existence. And if the Methodist Church will only care supremely about the Methodist "experience," it will still have a distinctive mission to perform. For no other Church is, by its very constitution, compelled to reconstruct its forms. The Methodist Church of the future can only grow, as in the past, by using its God-given power of free adaptation to the ever-changing social needs and the fuller light of new times.⁹²

Both the loss of confidence in denominationalism and the emphasis on the adaptability of Methodism tended in an ecumenical direction, and the war produced a new wave of ecumenicalism among Methodists. Soldiers at the front, religious and otherwise, could see no point in sectarian divisions between the Protestant denominations, nor between Protestants and Catholics. Chaplains may have had some scruples about the latter,⁹³ but they certainly had none about the former. Chaplain Alex Allen summarised the feelings of the soldiers when he noted:

Men for the most part do not know and do not care what denominational disease their padre suffers from. "Is he a man and one with us? If so, we love him and what he represents; if not, he may as well go home".⁹⁴

Allen himself felt certain that

...the Church has paid much attention and spent much energy in strife over the fiddling things of society instead of the sweet, sane things of our priceless

religion. For one thing, our denominational spirit and struggles seem in these serious days to be the merest piffle. It is true that as a Church we have tried to be broad, but the follies of men representing certain denominations are constantly quoted against the Church as a whole.⁹⁵

But in recording these opinions, Allen was being far from original. As a young Methodist minister, his views simply reflected and intensified those of the denominational leaders in New Zealand. The co-operation between chaplains at the front (and elsewhere, particularly in the United Institute at Featherston Camp), and the success of the undenominational Young Men's Christian Association, for perhaps the first time brought to fruition the desire for evangelical unity within the Protestant Churches that had been expressed for some time. Inspired by this example, and strengthened in their ecumenical convictions by the wastage of five or six competing denominations in small towns (especially when there was considerable difficulty in finding ministers for all the pulpits during the war), New Zealand ministers gained fresh willingness to move in the direction of Church Union. Using the watchword of 'efficiency', C.H. Laws perceived the need for unity and the prospects of union thus:

Amid the clamant needs and rare opportunities of the new time, our denominational separations, with their inevitable rivalries and competitions, will seem lamentably out of place. Thinking men are already growing impatient of them. They divide the Church, and allow the world to rule in the day when nothing should detract from the force of her impact upon the community. [....] Religion must show itself a noble spirit of charity and healing and good feeling in the nation, and the Church must annihilate her jealousies, unite her counsels, be less wasteful of her money and her energies, and shame the pride and power of the world by a new exhibition of her own interior unity. The world is not slow to see that there are no really profound differences separating many of the religious communions from each other, and that, given a real will to unite, the way could be

found almost at once.⁹⁶

Moves towards 'Evangelical Union' (between the Presbyterian, Congregational, and Methodist Churches) had been initiated by the Presbyterians in 1902, and welcomed by the pre-union Methodist Church, but rejected by the Presbyterians in 1904 because the majority in favour was insufficient.⁹⁷ Further moves were made by the Presbyterians in 1918; the reasons given by the Wellington Presbytery, in recommending that the Presbyterian General Assembly make overtures towards Evangelical Union, summarise well the motives for seeking union at that stage:

"...the manifest distress and loss occasioned by the work of the Christian Church through its manifold divisions, and especially... the waste of men, money and effort in our own country through the overlapping and over-multiplication of churches in sparsely-peopled rural districts;...the pressing need, at least, of a living federation of the churches for the solution of the exacting problems that the war is thrusting upon all the churches;...this fact that several denominations working by our side in this Dominion are very near us, both in their interpretation of the Evangel and in their general methods of work; and, above all,...the mind of our Lord reflected in His Word that His people should, wherever possible, without the sacrifice of essential convictions, manifest their inward unity in an outward union...."⁹⁸

The Methodists heartily welcomed these moves, and sought a union as wide as possible. So keen on union were they that, briefly, they even had hopes of the inclusion of the Baptists.⁹⁹ More seriously and significantly, the war began to reduce Anglican-Methodist tensions. Nineteenth century Wesleyan Methodism had spurned its Anglican origins in reaction to the ritualism of the Tractarian movement, and W.J. Williams was still quick to reject any Anglican assertion of the reality of Apostolic Succession, and to criticise Anglican refusal to join in united services.¹⁰⁰ But he

was pleased to report a united (Protestant) intercession service in the Christchurch Cathedral in 1918, in which Bishop Julius admitted:

..."How much we have lost by the divisions that have kept us asunder during these past centuries! How much we might hope for in the way of gain if the combination of spiritual forces represented here today could always be available for the Church's needs." 101

Williams agreed, commenting on the possibilities open to a united Church.

The tragedy of the very real loss referred to...as the result of our divisions should shake us from the complacency with which we are generally disposed to accept things as they are. Does anyone imagine that the liquor traffic would have gained its present cruel and colossal domination if it had been wrestled with in the full strength of an undivided Church? Would the Church stand so dumb and impotent as it does to-day in the presence of these alarming industrial troubles if it could have approached them unweakened by rival and conflicting inter-denominational appeals? Would the reproach of heathenism be the vast and shameful thing it is to-day if the energy devoted to the multiplication of sects and the promotion of denomination [sic] rivalries had been concentrated on the endeavour to carry out Christ's command to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature? 102

But again, though Methodists held this step to be most desirable and even very necessary in the proclamation of the Church's message, greater Church Unity could not of itself create a revival. L. B. Neale believed that the Church still had to seek and expect the conversion of sinners, in this case soldiers.

Unfortunately, there seems to be something in what some khaki men have said to me in sacred hours of confidence, that there is an absence of the evangelistic note in many modern addresses. They say the healing message of the Kingdom is not sufficiently emphasised. Far more than we realise, the average soldier is hungering for peace and light in Jesus. It is often concealed. 103

In order to find the required spiritual food, Neale, and all Methodist preachers, chose to fall back on the basic

evangelical truths.

That there is a very real deliverance, help, and peace in Jesus must be the dominant note of every spiritual leader in this new age. He must declare that Calvary is love's ultimatum to the soul, and that the Saviourhood of Christ is unchanging.

The idea that we are gradually evolving into the Christman and that that true religion is to give a brotherly hand upwards to every man in his slow, but sure, ascent over the backs of the tiger and the ape, is a useless remedy for sin-stained men. The tendency in some quarters to reduce Christianity to a kind of glorified ethical system, to remove its centre from the Cross to the Sermon on the Mount, robs the Gospel of identity and power. Preach an ethical creed merely, and the world will remain unmoved, unhealed, undelivered.

[.....]

Whittle Christianity down to a morality, and it is reduced to impotence. During my four years of service, hundreds of men, though outwardly rough and indifferent, have quietly acknowledged the beauty of Christ. If with spiritual earnestness and in tones of manliness and brotherliness we preach a living Christ, Who satisfies a living need, God alone can measure the result.¹⁰⁴

3. Methodism in Crisis: Evangelistic Failure

Methodists thus envisaged a certain kind of Church which would create a revival in the new age, and lead to times of renewed spiritual prosperity. During the war, Methodists had come to recognise the necessity of a post-war 'crusade'; the crucial problem was put thus:

Will the conservatism of our Churches yield to the new demand? Are we prepared for the necessary break from cherished traditions? [.....] If [very slight and useful innovations are] resented, will the leaders of the Churches accept the far more drastic changes required by the new situation, if we are to retain and press into service the "boys" who come back and the youth growing up in our midst? ¹⁰⁵

Moved by these considerations, Methodists regarded it as necessary to organise to cater for the returning soldiers, in the belief that these men would flock to the churches in

gratitude for the service given to them by the Christian Church at the front. But it became clear, even before the end of the war, that the soldiers who had returned (i.e. the invalided soldiers) were not attending church, and the trend continued. Methodist chaplains were at a loss to understand this, since they believed that there was little atheism at the front. Chaplain William Walker claimed that the problem began after the soldiers left France.

...the changed attitude takes place in England, after they have been evacuated, wounded or sick. The strain is over, nerves are overwrought, there is a terrible reaction; they are to a large extent relieved from military discipline, for a time they become sick of everything and everybody, themselves included. In such a state they become lax in morals, they are far removed from the restraining influence of home, and they are beset with temptations they never experienced in France.¹⁰⁶

Chaplain F.T. Read agreed, adding that the transition stage unsettled the soldier, whether or not he was wounded; furthermore, life at home would seem very quiet and stale compared to the front, and church services at home would appear to reflect this.¹⁰⁷

Such patterns were very worrying, because Methodists regarded this as the Church's unparalleled opportunity to win the masses. One speaker explicitly linked the soldiers and the masses, claiming that their callousness towards the Church was a major problem. The solution consisted of much practical care and attention.

The true church did not consist of the various denominations, but of all those who had the love of God in their hearts. The big gap that stood between the churches and the masses today could only be bridged by the church members realising that God was love and showing that truth in their daily lives.¹⁰⁸

Recognising the criticism of 'Camouflage religion; insincere worshippers; preachers who don't grip...¹⁰⁹ by the returned

soldiers, Methodists realised that church services and other methods of contact had to be attractive in order to win the soldier's attention. In assessing the Church's "attractiveness" to the soldiers, a theological dispute arose in which the tensions and confusion within the Methodist Church in the immediate post-war period were mirrored.

The dispute arose from an article by a wounded officer, W.E. Leadley, who attempted to explain why soldiers who became religious at the front wanted no contact with the Church when they returned home. Leadley believed that the main problem was the propagation of a Gospel that was irrelevant to the needs of the soldiers. The "old-time religion", with appeals for "decision for Christ" based on a fear of death, filled men who had fearlessly risked death with contempt: 'They are not attracted by our heaven, nor are they afraid of our hell!'¹¹⁰ Leadley believed that an appeal to the soldiers' sense of heroism and comradeship would be much more effective.

If these men could be given to see Christ, not as an awful Judge, who consigns the wicked to everlasting fire and the righteous to a special little heaven of their own, but as their Comrade and Friend; if they could realise that the biggest and bravest of Men is calling them to assist Him in a great adventure, that He needs their help because He is hard pressed with the fight against evil; if they could see Christ as their Greatest Pal, I believe they would be attracted to Him, because all their chivalry would respond to a call like that. [....] What would they not attempt for Him if only they could realise that? The Christ who is going to reach these men to-day is the Christ who will not only show them that He is indispensable to them, but also that they are indispensable to Him. Comrades of Christ! Standing together, fighting together, falling together, winning together, comrades right through to the end! Isn't that the religion of a man?¹¹¹

Such views completely discarded the evangelical element in the Methodist gospel in favour of an emphatically liberal

theology; that Methodists could seriously entertain them shows the extent of the war's impact in developing to their extremes ideas that were common in Methodism before the war. The reaction was swift. Mr F.H. Christian called Leadley's sort of preaching 'sentimental humbug' rather than 'the Gospel of Christ':

Not one word about the necessary acceptance of the sacrifice made for us on Calvary.... [....] That dead churches are too general everywhere is an appalling fact, but what is the reason? We are leaving a Christ-made for a man-made gospel. ¹¹²

Leadley replied that Christian's letter '...gives us an illustration of that spirit of "false piety" and "camouflage religion" which is keeping returned soldiers outside our Churches', ¹¹³ and accused Christian of pharisaism. But in asserting that he did believe in the Atonement, Leadley demonstrated that the central issue was the future life, especially of the dead soldiers. Leadley believed that death was a translation to higher service for them:

These brave spirits passed on to another life in the very act of sacrificing themselves, so that others might have larger and better lives, and we cannot doubt that they are now safe in the keeping of their Heavenly Father. ¹¹⁴

Thus bereaving relatives in the churches could receive consolation from the thought that '...God [has] seen and accepted the splendid sacrifices of these men, and...some day He [will] reunite in love once more those whom He [has] separated for a little while.' ¹¹⁵ Believing that "God is love", Leadley claimed:

Death is not the terminus of the journey of life; it is merely the junction where we change trains and go forward into a higher and fuller life, and I believe that at the junction many of our dear ones who made the greatest sacrifice will be waiting to join us on the upward journey to God. Surely this is a more reasonable and Scriptural belief than the dogmatic theology of Mr Christian, who would cheerfully

consign thousands of our fighting men to everlasting hell simply because they never attended church or expressed a belief in the atonement of Jesus Christ during the first part of the journey.¹¹⁶

But others rejected the contention that this was a 'scriptural belief'. The 'God of the Bible', Rev D. McNicoll claimed, was a wrathful and punishing God as well as a loving God: '...to preach that God is love without preaching the terrors of the law is to give us a distorted view of God.'¹¹⁷ E.E. Marsden believed that the possibility that God offered the sinner a chance of absolution of and redemption from his sins after death left no incentive to goodness.

Why make patriotism a door into the Kingdom? Our soldiers fought a righteous cause, but they did so because they were patriots, not because they were Christians. Every true Christian knows that he had to die a Christian as much on the battle front as on the home front. [....] Of what use is the change of heart, or of what use is the Bible or the church if the sinner and the saint are to be placed on an equal footing after death?¹¹⁸

Christian was criticised for claiming that Christ was never 'a pal of unregenerate men', but maintained that there was a '...difference between Christ the friend of sinners and sinners the friends of Christ....'¹¹⁹

Once again, Harry Ranston led the defence of evangelical theology, attacking all tendencies to create God in one's own image. He criticised the kind of God that Leadley required:

...it must be a God who has no connection with Love and sin and salvation and judgement; rather we must take all that democracy stands for, and worship that and call it democracy. God, he says, is democracy.¹²⁰

But he also quoted the soldier-poet, Mackintosh, against contemporary churchpeople: '...the God of many church-people was "like a super-bishop in an apron and a nice top-hat"'.¹²¹ The 'fundamental' test of the reality of a person's God was:

What is the attitude of this God of yours to wrongdoing? We all do wrong at [times], how do you think

God feels about it? Do you believe that your sin is regarded by Him as a real outrage against His holy character and His holy wishes concerning you. Do you feel that wrongdoing brings you into collision with a Being whose sanctity is inviolable, whose will is in direct opposition to all moral evil. One whose anger is real against sin? Do you feel that the Divine wrath is such an awful reality that sin lays on your conscience an intolerable burden under which, like Paul, you groan until free-grace removes it? Does your fall before the onslaught of the Tempter send you staggering with remorseful heart, bowed head, and beaten breast, into His presence to seek His peace-bringing pardon? Do you realise that any evil you do is such, and the Divine nature is such, that God burns with holy indignation against what He knows to involve the frustration of His most Fatherly purposes concerning the world?¹²²

Ranston warned that

When God is thought of as being not so very angry at sin, as so very easy in His condemnation of it, can we be amazed that we men are becoming more and more blind to the essential distinction between vice and virtue, right and wrong? It cannot be other than that light views of sin with all the accompanying shallowness and flippancy of religious experience should inevitably follow conceptions of God as "too kind to hurt anyone."¹²³

Whether or not the returned soldiers needed the kind of attention requiring adjustments by the Church was not at dispute; the issue concerned whether theological adjustments were required. Leadley, viewing the soldiers as soldiers, believed that such adjustments were needed, considering that the soldiers did not respond to the old evangelicalism. His opponents, viewing the soldiers simply as people, believed that the Gospel could not be altered to suit the tastes of outsiders. The Church was not winning (or, as Methodists thought, retaining) the soldiers, but the price of winning the soldiers was the abandonment of evangelical doctrine. Faced by this quandary, Methodists shared in the more general religious confusion of the immediate post-war period.

The theological problem described above was created by unrealistic views of the religious sentiments of the soldiers

at the front. In disputing the issue of what sort of appeal the returned soldiers would respond to, all writers tended to assume that the Gospel had fared well at the front. This was probably a result of the general expectation that religion would become prominent as men confronted the ultimate realities of life, an expectation apparently confirmed by the chaplains. Leadley could say:

Returned chaplains are unanimous in asserting that whilst working among the men at the front they found practically no opposition to religion, but, on the other hand, the responses made to their various appeals for decisions were invariably of an encouraging and gratifying nature, and I think it would be safe to say that in the Y.M.C.A. huts and similar institutions behind the lines in France, during the last four years, thousands of men have made the great decision to live henceforth for Christ.¹²⁴

It was clear, however, that a generous interpretation of the word "religious" was required for these 'decisions' to be "for Christ" in a more conventional sense. A situation of instability did not lend itself to permanent commitments, and it is not surprising that the chaplains complained of an anti-religious reaction once the soldiers had left the front.

Moreover, recent research has thrown doubt on the view that conditions at the front were favourable to the spread of Christianity at all. The scale of the war tended to undermine any belief in the providential ordering of the war for good. Bill Gammage says of the situation facing the Australian troops at the end of 1917:

...despite their valour during 1917, victory was as distant as ever. Valour was clearly not enough: the scale of the war was too immense for individuals to affect it, and men knew now that the fighting would butcher many before the great cause they upheld was won. Nothing had shaken their faith or honour, but their former hopes and aspirations were broken. [....] Quietly, and in his own way, each man gave up his future and made ready to die, perhaps uselessly,

for what he loved. His course was set, and he plodded wearily through a tired world, fighting till an end should come.¹²⁵

In a situation where "More [were] killed and died by a shell or a bullet than by a bayonet, more by chance than an aimed stroke..."¹²⁶ it became difficult or impossible to hold onto a belief in providential oversight. Fatalism was an attractive alternative because it was a belief that performed a similar function by

...easing the strain of uncertainty and preventing men from succumbing to fear. Yet fatalism was the antithesis of Christianity because it rejected the existence of a personal god and left the determination of each man's life to other 'forces'.¹²⁷

Mindy Chen develops the implications of these findings for soldiers of the Otago Division.

For the majority who were without any strong religious convictions, Christianity and the values and morals associated with it were rendered somewhat meaningless once the complex of social relationships with which they were associated were suddenly swept away. Accordingly many of the former social and moral restraints fell away.¹²⁸

Illicit sexual intercourse was rife, and condemnations of drinking and gambling created resentment. "To the soldier who was directed to kill, these prohibitions of minor immoralities were seen to be a 'straining at gnats while swallowing immense camels.'"¹²⁹ Thus Methodism in particular, with its tremendous concentration on the coercive social remedy of prohibition, was anathema to them.

But the antipathy to contemporary Christianity went deeper than that. The soldiers had become increasingly aware that the Church's espousal of the holy war, with its diabolisation of Germany, was absurd. The real enemy was war itself, and the soldiers soon learnt that it was easier not to play the official 'kill or be killed' game; the unofficial

'live and let live' system made for a (slightly) quieter war.¹³⁰ Methodists at home might have agreed that the real enemy was war; but for the soldiers, the war was so indescribably horrible that the abstract propaganda images which continued to move the civilians seemed ridiculous. This contributed to a sense of alienation from the civilian world. Consequently, the soldiers withdrew into their own fellowship.

The very intensity of their suffering had given them a strange sense of pride and had welded them together in common identity. [....] ...the Western Front had become their whole world, everything that was important to them was here. They had nothing to go back to.¹³¹

The volunteers had amounted to an "innocent army" in 1914,¹³² and this innocence had reflected, to some extent, the moral constraints of New Zealand society. World War I stripped the soldiers of this innocence, and so a moralistic denomination was far from acceptable to them.

In passing, it must be said that there was a section of the armed forces whose spirituality remained strong and vital despite the horrors of the war.¹³³ What happened to these men? What changes occurred in their outlook on their return from the war? It is significant that the Young Men's Bible Classes soon recovered their strength after the war; was this due to the return of the soldiers or the influx of a new teenage generation?

For Methodists, the soldiers' rejection represented a crushing and very obvious failure to win the people who had been so long sought by them. At the same time, there was no achievement in any other field of Methodist work to celebrate. The soldiers' vote, and then the adoption of the State Control option, robbed Methodists of prohibition in New Zealand. The Presbyterians dropped the possibility of Church

Union, and the outbreak of confessionalism ensured that the ecumenical option would not become a serious possibility between the wars.¹³⁴ The first five years after the war were very difficult for the Church, with numerical stagnation and decline;¹³⁵ the 1921 census statistics revealed, for the first time, a significant divergence between declared adherence and Methodist statistics of church attendance.¹³⁶ This hardship was reflected in a flurry of activity from the Welfare of the Church Committee, beginning with its report to the 1919 Conference.

...there is a general consensus of opinion that the Church, as a whole, is not living up to her privileges and responsibilities, nor showing that strong vitality which is so essential to spiritual progress. [.....]

While appreciating the earnest calls made in recent Conferences for spiritual advance, and the response made thereto, your Committee feels that the time is singularly opportune for our Church to seek a spiritual renewal, and to give herself afresh to Christ, as the only channel of blessing to the people of this land.¹³⁷

But neither the Methodist Church, nor the Churches as a whole were in any condition to undertake any "post-war crusade", and it would probably have failed dismally anyway. What was happening to these Conferential calls for spiritual advance is best gauged by the reaction to the call made in 1917.¹³⁸ One beneficial effect did ensue; foreign mission giving almost doubled to over \$10,000 in one year. This was caused more by the impact of the foreign mission deputation for that year than by any Conferential intention. Interest in foreign missions had risen greatly since the turn of the century;¹³⁹ in 1917 the deputation, from the Solomon Islands, consisted of Rev Reginald C. Nicholson and a native, Daniel Bula. Bula, contributing "a touch of the exotic"¹⁴⁰ at just the

right moment, "...carried New Zealand by storm. Methodists saw visions of the power of the Gospel to turn cannibals and headhunters into Christian gentlemen."¹⁴¹ A sarcastic dismissal of this episode misses the important point that a genuine spiritual awakening uses very human instruments and may have unexpected effects; but the episode does illustrate that Methodist expansion in New Zealand had become extremely difficult to achieve.

Indeed, conditions in the immediate post-war years seemed to make any awakening of any description almost miraculous. The Welfare of the Church Committee said to the 1921 Conference:

The conditions amid which the Church is doing her work are exceedingly acute. The foundations and buttresses of society are being shaken and disruptive forces are gaining new energy. In this hour of crisis the only alternatives before the world are CHRIST and Chaos.¹⁴²

The following year's report added:

Old bonds are broken and old props shattered. On many sides the attitude to the Church is one of indifference deepening into hostility. The conditions of the people, socially, morally and spiritually constitute a challenge to the Church, and call her to searching self-analysis.¹⁴³

The 1920 Conference channelled this 'self-analysis' into two special committees under the aegis of the Welfare of the Church Committee.¹⁴⁴ The suggestions of the Christchurch Reconstruction Committee had been tardily recognised in a modified form.¹⁴⁵

Conference Committee (A) reported on membership and on methods of conducting services and meetings. This focused on problems which were really the unresolved consequence of the decline of the class meeting and of its abolition as the test of church membership. Membership, it was declared, depended

on faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour, but the member needed to recognise '...our Lord as Saviour of the whole man in all his community relationships....'¹⁴⁶ The most pressing necessity, however, was the reintroduction of discipline in the member's life, and in the absence of a class meeting membership test, the regular participation in the Lord's Supper was recommended. The Committee believed that 'The continuance of a genuine spiritual experience is in almost all cases likely to express itself in such attendance....'¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, the rigorous examination of spiritual experience which the class meeting (when it was working properly) ensured was not accommodated by this requirement.

Thus some attention to the effectiveness of church services and meetings was necessary. Since the Sunday service had become the main vehicle of spiritual experience, 'slovenly and haphazard' worship needed to be removed. 'All that is best in music, song, and modern thought should be claimed for the service in the name of Christ.'¹⁴⁸ But these things depended on

Preachers - ministerial and lay - who are full of conviction, force and spiritual vitality, in touch with the movements of the day, spiritually and intellectually alert with an adequate conception of the work of the Living Spirit....¹⁴⁹

In this service, and also in mid-week meetings, 'solid teaching in Biblical, Ethico-Social and Doctrinal matters' was needed.

The failure of the Church as a teaching institution has been painfully brought home to us since 1914. There is overwhelming proof that the majority of our people have no clear grasp of some of the simplest fundamental verities of the faith, or those essential doctrinal emphases for which Methodism stands. Many of our perils have arisen from relegating to a

subordinate position the teaching function of the Church. The prevailing crude and confused ideas concerning the Bible and the things of the Spirit are fraught with danger. Our duty is to carry the principles of the Christian revelation into the life of to-day; yet the most of our people have no adequate knowledge of what those principles really are. Future progress depends not only upon the clearheaded presentation of the essential truths of revelation, for unless the mind be also satisfied, other appeals will not be permanently effective.¹⁵⁰

This was probably a reaction, among other things, to a wave of premillennial eschatology which had followed the jolting¹⁵¹ of the pre-war liberal optimism by the war. There had always been an undercurrent of resistance to the developing liberalism in Methodist theology, but this was the crucial strengthening influence which made possible the¹⁵² fundamentalist controversy of the 1920's.

Conference Committee (B) examined evangelism, and their report contained an important change in both theology and policy. The issue became intertwined with the question of whether to appoint another Connexional Evangelist after Rev Val Trigge's¹⁵³ departure. The Conference decided not to do so, and some of its reasons were shown in its views on evangelism. '...God fulfills Himself in many ways. No stereotyped leader is preserved; no uniform method succeeds; no homogeneous presentation of the Evangel wins men for holiness.'¹⁵⁴ This attitude contrasts strongly with the pre-war emphasis on aggressive evangelism, decisions for Christ, special missions etc., indeed, the Committee felt that these missions had 'outlived their day'. Methodism was turning its back on "instant holiness". But the rejection of one method of pursuing and attaining holiness required the adoption of another method. The Committee had no such method. Instead, it recommended:

Each minister should combine with his teaching and pastoral office the work of an evangelist. [....] God wants him to respect the processes and findings of his own mind, and to work along the line of his own God-given individuality. Evangelism is not to be identified with any single expression of it.¹⁵⁵

In fact, the advocacy of extreme individualism regarding the message to be preached was part of, and in some ways a justification for, the rejection of the old evangelicalism with its hellfire emphasis.

The presentation of the message must be modern, taking account of the changing needs and altered temperament of our time. [....] The infinite love of God in Christ; our Lord in "all the glory of His magnificent robust Humanity"; His hatred of cant and Pharisaism; His attitude to social wrong; His will and His power to perfect all that concerns us - these are the themes that draw men's hearts and satisfy men's needs.¹⁵⁶

The Committee offered the Communion table, 'a Forgotten Confessional', as an alternative to '...the raised hand and the signed card; ...the penitent form, the communion rail, the enquiry room....'¹⁵⁷ Finally, personal evangelism and 'good open-air preaching' was urged on Methodists.

There was a danger of descending into a 1920's version of what has been marvellously termed "nothingarianism" by Ian Sellers.¹⁵⁸ The Welfare of the Church Committee's report to the 1924 Conference stated:

...a paramount need of the present day is to acquaint our people with the accepted findings of Biblical Research, and to unfold to them in clear and concise terms that statement of our faith which is accepted by those Christian thinkers whose interpretations are more in harmony with the modern outlook upon life, and with the acknowledged findings of science.¹⁵⁹

Even this the Conference would not accept, emphasising instead

...positive, constructive and warm-hearted evangelism, and emphasis upon religion as personal experience, fundamentals which are unaffected by literary or scriptural investigation.¹⁶⁰

It proved extremely difficult to formulate a revised creed, which effectively meant extreme theological individualism by default.

Thus the Conference combined a hesitant advocacy of conciliation with modern thought with an attempt to stress practical religion strongly; but in so doing, it set the Church on a hopeless quest.¹⁶¹ It became easy to descend into an optimistic modernism characterised by an untheological homeliness. Such an approach could not deal with either lay fundamentalism or the world's bitter rejection of the Church. The pathetic question posed in a letter written just after the war remained unanswered.

Can any of your numerous readers tell us in a clear-cut, concise manner the gains of the Church in the recent war as compared with the great losses. Numerically, we know that the Church has suffered heavily. Has she "gained" from a spiritual standpoint?¹⁶²

New Zealand Methodists expected the war to bring religious revival. When it did not occur spontaneously, Methodists realised that they would have to create it. It was particularly important to Methodists to convert the soldiers, and so they attempted to listen to the soldiers and rectify the faults which the soldiers found in the churches. Doctrinal reconstruction was necessary; evangelistic effort was imperative; judgementalism had to be abjured; practical service needed to be emphasised over theological orthodoxy; denominationalism was redundant and Church Union was required. However, catering for the soldiers' views threatened the entire abandonment of Methodist orthodoxy; but there seemed to be no other way to win the soldiers. In fact, all such theories of necessary changes in church life

were motivated by a mistaken view of the religious receptivity of the soldiers. On their return from the front, they ignored the Methodist Church, and failure sent the Church into confusion and gloom regarding its mission. Attempts were made at Conferential level to map out new directions for New Zealand Methodism's church life, but these were of little help, at least in the immediate crisis.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER 8

- 1 'The Expeditionary Force' (editorial note), NZMT, 3/10/1914, p.8.
- 2 'New Year Congratulations' (editorial note), NZMT, 9/1/1915, p.8.
- 3 Minutes, Auckland District Synod, 1914, p.171
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Marrin, p.203; emphasis added.
- 6 See above, Ch.6, pp.159-60.
- 7 See 'Between Two Worlds: A Study of the Letters, Diaries and Reminiscences of Some Otago and Southland Soldiers in the Great War', Dunedin, University of Otago, 1982 (unpublished B.A. essay), pp.1-4.
- 8 Ibid., p.2.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 'An Evangelistic Campaign' (editorial), NZMT, 12/6/1915, p.8.
- 11 Ibid.
12. 'Religion and the War', NZMT, 24/7/1915, p.3. Quoted from '...a forcible article upon the increase of Sunday newspapers and general pleasure-seeking...' in the Christian World.
- 13 Sellers, I., Nineteenth-Century Nonconformity, London, Edward Arnold, 1977, p.30.
- 14 Lineham, p.4. The following argument follows Lineham's closely.
- 15 Ibid
- 16 Ibid
- 17 Out of the Common Way, p.25.
- 18 "Rural Methodism in New South Wales 1836-1902" in J.S. Udy and E.G. Clancy (eds.), Dig or Die: Papers Given at the World Methodist Historical Society Wesley Heritage Conference at Wesley College within the University of Sydney 10-15 August 1980, Sydney, World Methodist Historical Society (Australasian Section), 1981, pp93-4.
- 19 Rollo Arnold compares the fortunes of the major Protestant denominations, and analyses the Methodist experience thus:

...it was the Methodists who proved to be the shock troops of religion on the pioneering frontier. Unashamedly reverting to a religion of barns, willingly flocking to the ministry of their ardent lay preachers, in settlement after settlement they erected the first church building and provided the first regular Christian ministry, and many a small district that appeared on their circuit plans was to enjoy no other Christian services.

("The Patterns of Denominationalism in Later Victorian New Zealand", in C. Nichol and J. Veitch (eds.), Religion in New Zealand, Wellington, Tertiary Christian Studies Programme of the Combined Chaplaincies and

- the Religious Studies Department of Victoria University, 1980, p.103)
- 20 Out of the Common Way, pp.37-8
- 21 Ibid., p.52
- 22 Gadd, pp.25-6
- 23 'Methodism in Hawera: The History of a Church and a Community in a Pioneering Settlement', Dunedin, University of Otago, 1980 (unpublished B.A. essay), p.65.
- 24 For a good analysis of the effect of the prohibition movement on the Church's witness, see Lineham, p.7.
- 25 Entered the ministry in 1868; President in 1900; Chairman of the District twice; became a Supernumerary in 1903.
- 26 Hames notes that Trigge claimed 1200 conversions under his ministry in 1913; the 1914 membership returns, however, did not bear this out (Coming of Age, p.14).
- 27 See Appendix IV.
- 28 MCNZ, 1917, p.48.
- 29 'The Church and the War' (address), NZMT, 24/12/1915, p.9.
- 30 'A Plea for a Methodist Revival' (address) NZMT, 17/3/1917, p.8.
- 31 Ibid., p.9.
- 32 'Methodism after the War: The New Age', NZMT, 15/9/1917, p.4.
- 33 See above, Ch.5, pp.122-3, 126-30.
- 34 Entered the ministry in 1913; Chairman of the District once; died in 1948.
- 35 NZMT, 21/7/1917, p.4.
- 36 'Joyful News from the Front', NZMT, 8/7/1916, p.7.
- 37 Walker, W., 'Camp Life: Its Effects on the Men' (address), NZMT, 18/3/1916, p.5. Walker's career: entered the ministry in 1912; President in 1942; became a Supernumerary in 1945.
- 38 On the problems of camp life in Egypt, cf. the experiences of the Australian soldiers (W. Gammage, The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War, Canberra, Australian National University Press, 1974, pp.35-41).
- 39 At this time, the Nelson diocese had the reputation of being one of the more evangelical and ecumenical sectors within New Zealand Anglicanism.
- 40 Quoted in H.T. Peat, NZMT, 21/7/1917, p.4.
- 41 Quoted in 'Military Chaplains', NZMT, 21/7/1917, p.5.
- 42 'A Chaplain', 'The Soldier's View', NZMT, 22/7/1916, p.9.
- 43 'The New Soldiers' Religion: A Frank Statement by One of Kitchener's' (correspondence), NZMT, 26/6/1915, p.3. Reprinted from the Challenge.
- 44 Entered the ministry in 1910; killed in France in 1918.

- 45 NZMT, 8/12/1917, p.14
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Hay, W.A., 'Address to United Churches: A War-Time Call', NZMT, 2/9/1916, p.9. Hay's career: entered the ministry in 1897, Chairman of the District five times; transferred to the West Australian Conference in 1929.
- 48 Out of the Common Way, p.81.
- 49 'Methodism after the War: A Doctrinal Statement', NZMT, 29/9/1917, p.4.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Entered the New Zealand ministry in 1914; became a Supernumerary in 1940.
- 53 'Reconstruction: Our Doctrines', NZMT, 20/7/1918, p.7.
- 54 Entered the ministry in 1911; President in 1940; Chairman of the District six times; became a Supernumerary in 1952.
- 55 'The Message of Khaki to the Church', NZMT, 10/5/1919, p.14.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 'Reconstruction', p.7.
- 58 'The Church and the Future', NZMT, 22/12/1917, pp9,12. Text: Exodus 14:15. The "liberalism" that Ranston taught at Trinity Theological College between the wars created suspicion and opposition among sections of lay Methodism. But Ranston was rather more "evangelical" than many Methodists. He was a Primitive from England, and had trained for the ministry under A.S. Peake (Out of the Common Way, p.103); the combination of these influences clearly shaped his theological outlook. His evangelical zeal proved valuable just after the war, when, in a difficult and uncertain age, he was one of the leaders in the attempt to stimulate the flagging evangelistic spirit of Methodists. It may be noted, too, that his few contributions to the Methodist Times almost invariably showed a theological depth matched by few other contributors, even well-known British Methodist preachers.
- 59 'The Church and the Future', p.9.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 Laws, C.H., 'Methodism after the War: The Future of our Evangelism', NZMT, 27/10/1917, p.4.
- 63 Ibid.
- 64 'The Ambassador Beseeching' (address), NZMT, 8/7/1916, p.9. Text: 2 Corinthians 5:20.
- 65 'Khaki in Conference' (editorial), NZMT, 16/3/1918, p.8.
- 66 Hankey was a young British Anglican churchman who had felt unable to enter Holy Orders without first spending time discovering how ordinary people lived. He enlisted as a

- soldier and was killed during the war.
- 67 'The Church and the Age', NZMT, 26/5/1917, p.9. Text: John 13:34.
- 68 Ibid.
- 69 Ibid.
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 McKernan, pp196-7
- 72 Ibid., p.197
- 73 Ibid.
- 74 Ibid.
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 Ibid.
- 77 'The Church and the Age', p.9.
- 78 Ibid.
- 79 Ibid.
- 80 Ibid.
- 81 McKernan, p.185.
- 82 'The Church and the Age', p.9.
- 83 "Crow's Nest", 'En Avant', NZMT, 22/12/1917, p.7.
- 84 See above, Ch.5, p.142.
- 85 See Romans 8:1-17.
- 86 McKernan, p.185
- 87 Ibid., p.200.
- 88 On the effectiveness of Roman Catholic Chaplains at the front, see especially Marrin, p.208; also McKernan, pp.185-6.
- 89 Liversedge, A., 'Scheme of Reconstruction' (correspondence), NZMT, 30/3/1918, p.14. The facts that this committee gathered led to proposals for Standing Commissions of Conference on "Our Church", Our Gospel and Doctrines", Our Evangelism", and "Our Social Task"; these were presented to the 1918 Conference by the North Canterbury Synod. However, they were caught in the vicissitudes of ecclesiastical politics; two senior ministers criticised the proposals in derisive terms, and they were very quickly dropped for lack of speakers in support of them (NZMT, 16/3/1918, p.6). Liversedge, the convenor of the original committee, was unhappy at this treatment, and wrote a series of articles setting out the findings of the original committee.
- 90 Liversedge, A., 'Reconstruction: I. Our Church', NZMT, 25/5/1918, p.10. Workman was a Methodist historian at the turn of the century.
- 91 Liversedge, A., 'Reconstruction: Our Church', NZMT, 8/6/1918, p.7.
- 92 Ibid.
- 93 L.B. Neale believed that Protestant church unity was imperative:
It is inconceivable that the yoke of Rome will ever again be rivetted upon our necks, yet we must ever remember that our Protestant heritage is strongly assailed by confessed Romanists and by bastard Romanists within the Church.

- The pedal notes of Protestantism must be clearly sounded.
- ('The Message of Khaki to the Church', p.14)
- 94 NZMT, 8/12/1917, p.14.
- 95 Ibid.
- 96 'Methodism after the War: The New Age', p.4.
- 97 Out of the Common Way, p.142.
- 98 Quoted in 'Towards Union' (editorial note), NZMT, 27/4/1918, p.2.
- 99 'Baptists and Union', 'A Welcome Rapprochement' (editorial notes), NZMT, 28/9/1918, p.1.
- 100 On the former, see 'Bishop Sprott on Reunion' (editorial), NZMT, 15/9/1917, pp.8-9; on the latter, see 'Anzac Celebrations' (editorial note), NZMT, 13/5/1916, p.1., and 'Bishop Julius on Church Union' (editorial), NZMT, 27/10/1917, p.8.
- 101 Quoted in 'Towards the Sunrising' (editorial), NZMT, 25/5/1918, p.8.
- 102 Ibid.
- 103 'The Message of Khaki to the Church', p.14.
- 104 Ibid.
- 105 Pickett, H.J., 'When Peace Comes', NZMT, 26/5/1917, p.5.
- 106 'The Problem of the Returned Soldier' (paper), NZMT, 23/11/1918, p.14.
- 107 'The Problem of the Returned Soldier' (address), NZMT, 15/2/1919, p.9.
- 108 Struthers, J.B., 'Post War Problems', NZMT, 21/12/1918, p.5. Struthers was the Secretary of the Christchurch Workers' Educational Association.
- 109 Leadley, W.E., 'The Church and the Returned Soldier', NZMT, 18/1/1919, p.7.
- 110 Ibid.
- 111 Ibid.
- 112 'The Church and the Returned Soldier' (correspondence), NZMT, 1/2/1919, p.5.
- 113 'The Church and the Returned Soldier' (correspondence), NZMT, 1/3/1919, p.14.
- 114 'The Church and the Returned Soldier' (correspondence), NZMT, 12/4/1919, p.13.
- 115 NZMT, 1/3/1919, p.14.
- 116 Ibid.
- 117 'We Love Him because He First Loved Us' (correspondence), NZMT, 7/6/1919, p.10.
- 118 'The Church and the Returned Soldier' (correspondence), NZMT, 15/3/1919, pp.14-15.
- 119 'The Church and the Returned Soldier' (correspondence), NZMT, 15/3/1919, p.3.
- 120 'Red-haired and Snub-nosed Gods', NZMT, 12/4/1919, p.5.
- 121 Ibid.
- 122 Ibid.
- 123 Ibid.
- 124 NZMT, 18/1/1919, p.7.
- 125 Gammage, p.193.
- 126 Ibid., p.259
- 127 McKernan, p.189.

- 128 Chen, p.127
- 129 Ibid., p.129; quotation from O.E. Burton, The Silent Division: New Zealanders at the Front 1914-1919, Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1935, p.190.
- 130 Chen, p.69.
- 131 Ibid., p.135
- 132 Ibid., p.4.
- 133 Ormond Burton was an articulate representative of this group; Chen has perhaps made enough use of his writings, despite the fact that he belonged to the Auckland Division, for the lack of an exhaustive treatment of his views to detract from the overall work.
- 134 The Methodist phase of this confessionalism was perhaps the "...spate of books, good bad and indifferent, dealing with Wesley and Methodism" (Coming of Age, p.38) that appeared between the wars.
- 135 See Appendix IV.
- 136 The 1922 Conference was sufficiently concerned to order an enquiry into the divergence in the sets of statistics, which was very thoroughly undertaken by the General Statistical Secretary, Rev M.A. Rugby Pratt (MCNZ, 1923, pp.67-9). Pratt's career: entered the ministry in 1902; President in 1932; Connexional Secretary 1927-45; Chairman of the District five times; became a Supernumerary in 1946.
- 137 MCNZ, 1919, p.50.
- 138 See above, pp.226-7
- 139 See above, Ch.1, p.33
- 140 Carter, p.100.
- 141 Ibid., p.244.
- 142 MCNZ, 1921, p.49.
- 143 MCNZ, 1922, p.72.
- 144 MCNZ, 1920, pp.50-1
- 145 See Above, n.89, p.267.
- 146 MCNZ, 1921, p.50.
- 147 Ibid.
- 148 Ibid., p.51.
- 149 Ibid., p.50.
- 150 Ibid., p.51.
- 151 See a correspondence dispute in 1921 based on criticisms of a 'great pre-millennial wave' in Auckland by the Methodist Times' official correspondent (probably a minister) in Auckland ('The Second Coming', three letters, NZMT, 20/8/1921, p.7. 17/9/1921, p.14).
- 152 Coming of Age, p.43.
- 153 MCNZ, 1921, p.57.
- 154 Ibid., p.52
- 155 Ibid., p.53
- 156 Ibid.
- 157 Ibid.
- 158 Sellers, p.29.
- 159 MCNZ, 1924, p.63
- 160 Ibid., p.65, emphasis added.

161 This is well covered by Lineham, pp12-13.
162 "J.O.", 'Church and the War', NZMT,
19/7/1919, p.14.

CHAPTER IX

SOCIAL AND MORAL RIGHTEOUSNESS

If the conditions under which the Church was attempting to demonstrate the reality of Christ to New Zealand were worrying after the war, Methodism felt that a great opportunity existed to present Christ convincingly in a new way - through social reform. Responding to the increasing collectivism of the era, Methodists sought to affirm the justice of people's hopes for improved living conditions, and to claim these people for Christ by Christianising the movements for social reform. This increasingly led Methodism into the political arena, mainly through the agitation for prohibition. By World War 1, these developments were firmly entrenched within Methodism, and the coming new age was seen as the age of social righteousness. This chapter will examine the meaning of social righteousness for Methodists, and assess the problems that Methodists were encountering in their progress towards their dream of a godlier nation.

1. The Social Question

Late nineteenth century Methodism became deeply conscious of its isolation from the working classes; working people were not attending its services. To some extent, this simply emphasised one of the socio-economic groups that Methodism was having difficulty in winning and influencing; it was the particular focus on one level of society of a general problem. But this intensified concentration on the estrangement of the working classes from Methodism had a considerable influence on Methodism through helping to precipitate a major shift in Methodist rhetoric and, to a

lesser extent, activity.

The reason for the problem was held to be simple. Methodism was not catering for the working classes; it was pandering to middle class tastes and forgetting its mission in a desire to accommodate the requirements of respectability. H. P. Hughes' Methodist Times ran an essay competition on why workers did not attend church. The winner of the second prize focused on the respectable indifference of contemporary Methodism as a degeneration from the fervour of early Methodism.

But really whose fault is it that the artisan classes do not go to Church? Will you tell me candidly where you think the blame lies? The churches themselves are to blame; we think it lies at their doors. This great curse of indifference that rests upon us men outside is the result of the apathy and indifference that clouds the churches inside. [....] The Churches have forgotten their origin. They don't [sic] remember what their fathers were. The great evangelistic revival under Wesley and others ... was among the workers - the toilers with hands and head. It found them in a position similar to ours outside the Churches. It moulded them into a Church. The blessing that rested upon them brought them success and affluence; they were lifted to a higher level. But the next generation forgot all that; they stepped into their fathers' places, began where they left off, and remembered not the pit out of which they were dug. Forgetting their origin, the Churches began to neglect their duty to others, and the obligation that rested upon them to publish the Gospel. They built themselves places of worship, called pastors after their own mind, made themselves comfortable, went no more into the highways and hedges seeking the lost. Our out-of-door preaching became a lost art. They settled upon their lees, ceased to be aggressive, left us to our fate. They had built the Churches; there was plenty of room, but if we did not come, it was no business of theirs to fetch us. But when a Church ceases to be aggressive a curse [comes] upon it. The very moment it stops growing it begins to decline.

There was a time when that word sin had a tremendous meaning. The wrath to come was something fearfully real, hanging with awful threatenings over every unsaved soul; but the dulled spiritual perception no longer sees sin as God sees it - that abominable thing that He doth hate, that He cannot for one

moment tolerate and in nowise condone, nor possibly pass over its penalty. Sin is smoothed over, toned down by the dimness of the vision. When sin does not appear sin, the adorable Lord Jesus Christ is robbed of His glory, His atonement shorn of its merit, the grace of the Holy Spirit forgotten or ignored.¹

Indifference was the result of the decay of experimental religion. Indifference meant that the children of religious parents could not see spiritual graces in them; indifference meant that lukewarm Christian workers undertook no aggressive work for their Lord. In such a situation, the Church would find itself unable to overcome class distinctions and welcome the workers to its services.²

There is of course, some degree of truth in these charges; they reflect, though describing the peculiar pattern of Methodism, a fairly normal and almost inevitable progression in religious organisations. But two things should be noted. Firstly, though the poorer classes made up the great majority of the early Methodists, Methodism did not appeal uniformly to all groups within these classes. Methodism was significantly under-represented among "the very lowest strata of society", and drew its strength from occupational groups a little higher in the social scale, mainly artisans.

Societies sprang up particularly among the artisan and labouring classes of manufacturing districts in the north-east, among workers in the textile industries of the north Midlands and the West Riding, in the Potteries, among the Cornish tin miners and the domestic craftsmen of the West Country woollen trade, in seaports and fishing villages, and in agricultural areas characterised by extensive freeholding. Tradesmen, soldiers, and small manufacturers were potential Methodist recruits.³

Secondly, though the tendency for Methodists to rise in the social scale emerged very quickly,⁴ the declining influence of early Methodist spirituality in nineteenth

century Methodism was not caused simply by the search for a new kind of spirituality which would cater for new notions of respectability, powerful though this factor was.⁵ Alan Gilbert has shown that Methodism (and Evangelical Non-conformity generally) was able to increase rapidly in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries because it still had access to the social groupings from which early Methodism arose.⁶ On the other hand, social changes in the nineteenth century, at least as much as developments within Methodism itself, robbed Methodism of its major social base of recruitment, thus making consolidation necessary and forcing Methodism to concentrate on a constituency which was gradually rising in the social scale.

The pretentiously middle class ethics of the emerging Victorian nonconformity, the preoccupation with order, respectability, and style, reinforced the external social pressures cutting Methodist, Congregational, and Baptist communities adrift from the lower sections of the social constituency on which they had relied during the early industrial age.

Whatever the reasons were, a situation had emerged where the workers were noticeably absent from Methodist ministrations, and there was much truth in the reasons discovered by the winner of the second prize in the Methodist Times' competition. But the Methodist Times chose, as the winner of the competition, an essay reflecting views of the problem that Methodists were increasingly adopting by the end of the century.⁸ Written by a shipwright, William Hunter, it began by recognising:

...working men are not universally opposed to Christianity. They have no fault to find with Jesus Christ; neither would they take up any directly hostile attitude toward the Christian Church; they simply go their own way, ignoring the Church as completely as though she did not exist at all.

Hunter then claimed that the Church had always taught

working people the doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood; eventually, workers realised that Universal Fatherhood implied Universal Brotherhood. Class distinctions prevented them from discovering signs of this brotherhood in the Church, but workers did not give up the idea of Brotherhood; influenced by this, they began to believe that they deserved better living standards and a chance to share in life's rewards.

But with this idea of "The Brotherhood of man" firmly embedded in their minds, they began to crave for higher and better conditions of life, a position more befitting the "Sons of the Lord Almighty," and to think that, as children of God, they were entitled, at least, to a share in those good things which go to make life brighter and happier, which their Father had provided with such a lavish hand.¹⁰

The Church was indicted for failing to encourage these aspirations.

The church ought to have been first to recognise the hopefulness of these signs, and to have placed herself at the head of this upward movement - to lead forth this rising host of newly-awakened men, guiding them when they would go wrong, restraining them when they showed a disposition to proceed recklessly, leading them by sure and certain steps onward, upward, Godward.

Fortunately, the labour movement had 'abundant vitality' anyway, and could withstand rebuffs; but, tragically, it turned aside from the Church, eventually leading to the situation where the Church and the workers were 'poles apart'. This, largely legendary though it may have been, was the reformist Methodist view of the history of the relationship between the Church and labour.

Reformist Methodism was on less shaky ground when it analysed the reasons for the contemporary estrangement between the two sides. Three groups shared the responsibility for the situation. Firstly, the ministers

were culpable in their ignorance of the conditions of working class lives.

They are not by any means the selfish, callous set of men that working-men imagine them to be, one only needs to hear ministers discussed by a body of working-men to discover that there is but little real knowledge of ministers amongst them. But for this the ministers themselves are chiefly responsible, they keep themselves to themselves to such an extent, or confine their visits to such a very select circle, that the working classes have no opportunity of knowing them, except by hearing them in the pulpits - and in the pulpit they very often reveal their very scanty knowledge of working-men. The most that can be said of ministers in general is that they are absolutely¹² out of touch with that larger life of the workers.

Secondly, laymen bore a larger share of the blame. The workers usually came into contact with them at work as objectionable foremen or rapacious employers (though some Christian laymen were sincere).

Their main objection to the minister is that they do not see enough of him during the week; their objection to the layman is that they see a great deal too much of him, so much, in fact, that they are not likely to go anywhere on the Sunday where they are likely to come into contact with him.¹³

The third group was the workers themselves; their part will be examined below.

Much Methodist attention was devoted to the attempt to solve this problem. On one level, the solution was felt to lie in efforts to make church services more attractive to the workers, and to find ways to get the workers to these services. Such alternatives were very often posed as a solution to this problem, and less often tried. Methodists regarded any experiments they made as successful, but the problem remained, as evidenced by the continual verbal attempts to solve it. Since Methodism made few significant practical attempts to solve the problem, it is not surprising

that the greatest impact of the problem lay in the realm of rhetoric, where attempts at theoretical explanations influenced Methodist theology.

As indicated above by Hunter, the Christian response to the social question began with a recognition of the universal fatherhood of God; God was the Father of everyone. Contrary to Hunter's belief, this was a very recent theological emphasis; but it proved so popular to late nineteenth century Methodist minds that it seemed self-evident - so much so that in the considerable body of literature on the relation of Christianity to Socialism in the thirty-five years to World War 1, there is no discussion of or attempt to prove the truth of the contention. It was an emphasis not without problems, however. Rev W.B. Pope, a leading nineteenth century British Wesleyan theologian, secured the alteration of the answer of the question in the Methodist Catechism, 'Who is God?' from 'An infinite and eternal Spirit' to 'Our Father'.¹⁴ Nobody could accuse Pope of being a sentimental theologian;¹⁵ but the sentimentalisation that this abandonment of theological and evangelical rigour represented was very popular. Many years later, a leading New Zealand minister,¹⁶ Rev George T. Marshall, attacked the 'newness' of the conception for '...leaving out something which is essential and exaggerating the rest, the result being an ill-balanced idea of the great Fatherhood.'¹⁷ Marshall believed that contemporary conceptions of the Fatherhood of God showed Unitarian tendencies: 'The modern motion regards God as the Father primarily of man....'¹⁸ This flattered man by placing him at the centre of the universe; but experience, Marshall believed, proved the truth of Trinitarianism:

... the true doctrine reckons Him Father, first of the Only-begotten Son; secondly, of those who are united to Him by faith, and thirdly, Father of the human race, a relation which has suffered dislocation through sin.¹⁹

The charge that this doctrine placed man at the centre of the universe may or may not have been true; but it accurately reflected the fact that Methodists were much more concerned to bring out the implications of the Universal Fatherhood of God for human society. A leading British Wesleyan preacher, Rev J. Ernest Rattenbury (who led the Wesleyan opposition to British Methodist Union after World War I)²⁰ expressed many of the major ideas flowing from this doctrine succinctly:

And if God is the Father of men, it implies a universal brotherhood. It will only be in the sense of a great human fraternity that we shall be able to gain the social alterations we so much need. If we are to have a great movement of human betterment it will never be brought about by men working in their own interests. It will mean a great deal of sacrifice, a great deal of giving up for the sake of others. [....] ...we must have this great sense of brotherhood. It can only be a reality instead of a fancy to us, as we believe in the Fatherhood of God binding humanity together in one family. ...that idea of the Fatherhood of God, and the consequent brotherhood of men is essential to us in all our strivings for social betterment. Where you have a family the strong will help the weak. We want the family spirit interpreted in society to-day. I believe it is so interpreted to a great many outside the Christian Church, as well as to those inside. There are the weak and stricken, and troubled, and wretched, and outcast, and there are the strong and the powerful. But the family spirit will always mean that the stricken and troubled ones will be cared for.... If only we everywhere realise the Fatherhood of God, and if men and women realise that they are bound together in a great brotherhood because of that great Father, then they will spend themselves and spend their strength, and mind, and heart, and soul in striving to save the lost, and the weak, and the fallen.²¹

The analogy of family life was popular in an age of friendly, familial community in religiosity.

This message was rooted in the precepts and example,

indeed in the very incarnation, of Jesus. An early writer, in examining the bearing on Socialism of the '...doctrine which is the very foundation and corner-stone of Christianity - the doctrine of the Incarnation of the Filial Word...'²², concentrated on the human side of Christ's nature.

From the idea of the Incarnation inevitably flows the idea of the solidarity of mankind. In the impersonal humanity of Christ, the race is one and indivisible. His human nature is not mine only, nor thine only, but is the nature of me, and of thee, and of all men. In Him the entire race is summed up and concentrated. He is Universal Man; in Him each man ...finds his true self.

Caste, class, position, - these divisions are arbitrary and artificial, created by the anti-Christian spirit of selfish isolation and exclusiveness. In Christ they do not exist. His appearance as man annulled these distinctions: henceforth men are to be known only as men, equal before God, equal with each other.

Being thus incorporate in Christ, no man, and no body of men, have a right to divide themselves from the rest of the race....²³

Methodists were against the selfish individualism of modern society, believing that it was 'the very spirit of Anti-Christ.' Society therefore needed a thorough reconstruction from its foundations if it was to be co-extensive with Christianity.

A socialistic democracy, founded upon the recognition of each man's participation in the Divine Humanity, and vitalized and governed by the law of Christian love, - this is the ideal order of the world. When this shall be attained, war, pauperism, the fever of competition, and the selfishness of gain - shall be abolished; peace, unity and brotherhood shall rule; and the kingdom of God shall be established on earth.²⁴

But these views created tensions between Christian Socialism and Methodist Evangelicalism. The traditional Methodist emphasis on the salvation of the human soul seemed to smack of the individualism that created problems in society, where rich Christians could ignore philanthropic

obligations because the earthly order was immaterial to the heavenly rescue.

The mistake of the past appears to have arisen from a very fatal misapprehension of Christian duty. The leaven of asceticism has fostered the feeling that Christian men should not interest themselves in the duties of citizenship, but, under the plea of living apart from the world, has taught that the building up and working out of our social and political institutions should be left to men of the world, so-called. Christianity, speaking broadly, has presented two phases to the world. Catholicism, in its pretentious boast of possessing a Catholic law - but a Catholic law without liberty for the individual, and so a solecism - has built up that huge despotism which the world groans beneath to-day. Protestantism, on the other hand, has promulgated the law of individual liberty, or the rights of every man to freedom of opinion, of utterance, of action - freeing the individual from all constraint,

"Except what
Wisdom lays on evil men."

And there can be no question but that the result of the development of individual liberty by Protestantism has been far more beneficial to humanity than the attempt of Rome to formulate an universal law apart from and opposed to liberty, the outcome of which must ever be rebellion. But they are both alike defective, both comparatively good in themselves, essential parts of a whole, but not the whole.²⁵

The sort of solution envisaged was based on the recognition that

What remains to be done is to bring the collective man into harmony with the individual man. The rights, the liberty of the individual which are so readily conceded in theory, must be compatible with the rights of man in the aggregate. The more perfect development of human Christology, which combines the broadest Catholicism with perfect individual liberty, is what the world is waiting for. Protestantism is not final, but it has laid the true basis, on which can be built the universal law essential to the complete idea of individual liberty. On this basis the new society, the true Christian society, is to be reared.²⁶

The writer posed a series of rhetorical questions:

Is not this the law and the prophets, no less than the gospel of the Nazarene? "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Does not this golden maxim cover all the ground, and provide a cure for all our social disease? Is it not the regulating, harmonising principle that will unify in the bonds of a perfect brotherhood? Is it not the true socialism?²⁷

Perhaps; but only with some reinterpretation of the intended audience and sphere of living of Christ's words. From this resulted an interpretation envisaging a very optimistically material Kingdom of God on earth.

The teachings of Christianity, the practical application of its precepts to the relations of the different classes which compose society, would...remedy all our social evils. We do not overlook the fact that the word of the Lord is addressed to men not in the aggregate, but in their individual capacity; but none the less is it to be influential on communities in their corporate and social relations. It cannot for a moment be conceded that the Gospel of Christ will be fulfilled if society is to be perpetuated in contention, in anarchical labour, in isolation, and a state of insolidarity. It does not contemplate that society should struggle all through its dispensation in its present chaos, but it proposes harmony, order, peace, and happiness, as the outcome of its principles.²⁸

Thus the mission of the Christian in the world was of a much more corporate nature than Methodists had previously thought.

He came to establish a kingdom not of the world, but, nevertheless, in the world, in the theatre of human life, through the media of human activities as operative on the industrial and commercial pursuits of life; and in all the relations of men the principles of this kingdom are to be illustrated, and the kingdom itself established. This is to be the leaven that, operative in human society, will work out in harmony with the instincts of humanity, in conservation of every individual right, the highest good of the whole, and will establish that form of society in which liberty, equality, fraternity in their New Testament sense will prevail universally.

Christ did not lay down any strictly defined code of laws, but simply enunciated principles which are inclusive of all human interests and rights, and are applicable to every form of society, in every phase of civilisation, thus proving himself to be the man

of the ages-not of one age, or one civilisation, but of every age, of every civilisation.²⁹

Here the problems began for late nineteenth century Methodists. If Christ had laid down broad principles, it was for his Church to work out the specific applications for the needs of each age. Disagreement could, and did, occur; this was largely attributable to the sheer confusion over terms and their meanings, but also to real philosophical and theological difficulties. Rev J.T. Pinfold undertook to prove that Socialism was compatible with Christianity, quoting definitions of Socialism from standard authorities.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica says:- "The ethics of Socialism are identical with the ethics of Christianity." The Standard Dictionary defines Socialism as "A theory or policy that aims to secure the reconstruction of society, increase of wealth, and a more equitable distribution of the products of labour through the public (collective) ownership of labour and capital (as distinguished from property), and the public (collective) management of all industries. Its motto is: 'Everyone according to his deeds.'" Professor Ely says that "Socialism is simply applied Christianity; the Golden Rule applied to everyday life," and the Rev F.M. Sprague said that "Socialism being the product of social evolution, the only danger lies in obstructing it."³⁰

Pinfold's own hopes for Socialism rested on what he believed it could achieve.

When one thinks hard on the condition of the poor, who have to put up with shoddy clothing, shoddy food,...and too often a shoddy Christianity, it is apt to bring you to the conclusion that the present state of society could be vastly improved upon. Socialism would eliminate the slum, and would it be pleasing to Christ, think ye, to know that "the least of these" had ample breathing space, a plentiful supply of clothing, and other things which go to make life worth living?³¹

Pinfold found a doughty opponent in a layman, S. Woods, who replied perceptively:

...I strongly repudiate the contention that if this system was established, that then all men would be forced into a right, brotherly, and Christian relationship one to another, and that poverty and slum would disappear, that it would simply be applied

Christianity. An assumption which at once betrays a misconception of the true, and real teaching of the Gospel of Christ, ignoring the awful fact that the great taproot of all the disorder, confusion, and selfish tyranny in the world is sin - and that until men are led to fear and love God, they never will and never can feel and act rightly toward their fellow men; that apart from this great ruling principle, men, from the highest to the lowest, rulers and ruled, will continue to indulge in drunkenness, dishonesty, defrauding and taking advantage one of another, and will still waste their substance in gambling and riotous living; and even under the most favourable auspices of human life, there will be to the end of time some poor, some moderately well off, others rich, just according to character, ability, disposition, and other causes.³²

Woods was assailed as the "apostle of individualism", but stood his ground. The Bible, he believed, proved that Socialism could not remove the slum.

...it is written, of [the] heart, that it is at enmity with God, and is not subject to the law of God; neither, indeed, can be. And further, that it is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Here we have undoubtedly the abiding cause, and prolific source of the slum, and all other existing evils, whether pertaining to the individual, community, or nation. ...according to Scripture teaching no possible system of political economy can provide the cure, or purify the stream that will necessarily flow from such a corrupt fountain.

...apart from the vitalising power of the Holy Spirit of God, there can be no effectual or permanent remedy. [....] ... apart from [a] great and Divine change in the hearts of the multitude, under any and every system of social economy, the road to the slum will be thronged as ever. If the religion of Christ does not effect the desired remedy, certainly socialism never can;³³ to suppose so is contrary to reason, and Scripture.

Pinfold also stood his ground, claiming that the answer lay in the nationalisation of the instruments of production and distribution: "Freedom of effort" would be greater and nobler when the welfare of [a man's] country and humanity is put before self.' Whether or not this was so, he was sure that

...socialism is a more Christian system than competition, that it will enable men to live lives

and act towards their brothers in the true spirit of Christianity, not of Churchianity, mark you. ³⁵

After all,

Surely, if I have any love for mankind, and I see one class going to the devil through being allowed to live on the labours of others, and another class submerged in squalor, poverty and degradation, I should try to alter that. And if that latter class were led to see that, through want of equality of opportunity and the exploitation so long practised by the former class - in short, become class-conscious - and acted accordingly, would you blame them? The lion and the lamb should lie down together, says Mr Woods in effect, and he knows well that the present system insists that the lamb must be inside. ³⁶

The main problem was that both men had sound arguments, and neither really had a satisfactory answer. Woods, on a religious level, could see that mere political action could not remove the human corruption which lay at the root of unjust social systems. Pinfold, on a political level, could see that the mere proclamation of the Gospel could never influence enough people to seek the removal of social injustices. Woods firmly applied the old evangelicalism to the social problem; but Pinfold leaned towards the new, collectivist Christian Socialism, and was increasingly being followed by the hierarchy of the Methodist Church in doing so.

The kind of programme that was being endorsed by Methodist Christian Socialists in these years is summarised in the Report of the Sociological Committee of the Canadian Methodist General Conference. ³⁷ Since the striving for wealth could destroy the soul, the employers' wealth was to be used 'to make manhood', not vice versa; thus Methodists supported the living wage, reduced hours and improved conditions of labour, and time for recreation and worship; the employees' duty was, in return, faithful service. Antagonism between

labour and capital was not necessary; each had rights of association, and compulsory arbitration of disputes would ensure industrial harmony and regard for the public welfare. The responsible stewardship of wealth required opposition to political corruption, electoral bribery, and manipulated speculation. The Report concluded:

The whole economic organisation of to-day depends for its stability and progress upon credit and confidence. The general character of our industrial and financial leaders is to be commended, and has contributed in the highest degree to our national prosperity. The mutual interdependence of our times is such that upon the captains of commerce, finance, and industry has developed a great trust. Let them discharge it in accordance with the principles of Christian integrity. Let them keep from the very appearance of evil.

Morality is the greatest asset in the production of wealth, and immorality is the greatest source of waste and loss. With the true application of Christian stewardship, much of social and economic evil will pass away. In our country, where Providence has been so bountiful, if there is poverty and injustice, it is not to be traced to natural conditions, but to causes that are remediable by the individual or joint action of the people.

The solution of all social problems lies in the recognition that selfishness is the universal sin, not of the rich only, but also of the poor. The Church, therefore, will best aid society by preaching the gospel of unselfishness, thus bringing all classes into one fellowship of service. A salvation as broad as the preaching of Jesus is the essential need of the times.³⁸

Such a programme was quite different from that of "Atheistic Socialism", and deliberately so. Atheistic Socialism sought class conflict, Christian Socialism inter-class harmony. The Church presumed to stand between capital and labour in a position of objectivity, able to see both viewpoints and also able to see the allegedly "higher" needs of the soul. Such a standpoint had political ramifications, and in Britain a very close alliance between Nonconformity and the Liberal Party developed in the nineteenth century.

This alliance did not develop to anything like the same extent in New Zealand politics, mainly for two reasons: party structure did not develop in New Zealand politics before the 1890's, and New Zealand society lacked an Established Church (though some Anglicans often tried to behave as if this were not true). However, allegiances appropriate to British social life were brought to New Zealand and retained some importance, no matter how inappropriate they might have been in New Zealand. Thus the growing alliance between Methodism and Liberalism was brought to New Zealand, and was much strengthened by the predominance of liberal Methodism among the Wesleyans in New Zealand.

The strength of the liberalism of New Zealand Methodism is best gauged not by reflection on the liberal character of Methodist Christian Socialism, but by the greatly increased importance in New Zealand Methodism of an issue which was a feature of British Methodism, and yet which encountered resistance there from a Wesleyan Tory element: prohibition. Socialist thought had little influence on the local circuit life of New Zealand Methodism, but prohibition became New Zealand Methodism's major contribution to New Zealand political life at the turn of the century, because the stand of official Methodism was very strongly backed by the Methodist laity. In prohibitionism, the newer collectivism and the older individualism merged at a time when Methodists were not prepared to abandon older views of their gospel entirely.

The survival of these older views is best demonstrated by returning to Hunter's apportioning of the responsibility for the estrangement of the workers from the Church. He

believed that the workers themselves were partly responsible; some were slaves to degrading vices, others chased madly after worldly pleasures, and others again simply were not aware of any spiritual need within themselves.

Here, then, we have the majority of working-men practically shutting themselves out of the Church; some down in the very gutter hugging the chains that bind them, perhaps more who are led captive by their passion for pleasure, and all held in the grip of a kind of gross materialism. [....] Their own wickedness, their own frivolity, their own materialism goes far to answer the question, "Why they do not go to Church."³⁹

There was still a need for individual regeneration, and Methodists had no cause and no need to abandon their traditional concerns. This is best reflected in a story told by H.P. Hughes.

A great meeting was held in Exeter Hall; the place was crammed with working men and their wives... - the great building was crowded to the ceiling with some of the finest and sturdiest representatives of the English working classes. Several speeches were made by public men, but none of the utterances were equal to those of one of the working men present; he uttered words of profoundest philosophy, and was enthusiastically applauded. He ... looked like an engine-driver; he came to the front and delivered himself of the following sentiment, which was cheered again and again with boundless enthusiasm by those working men and their wives. He said: "Mr Chairman, there are some people who say to us in the present day legislate, legislate, legislate! So say we working men. Parliament can do a great deal for us, and the sooner the better. There are others who say, Educate, educate, educate! So say we working men, and we are thankful for what has been done for the education of the working classes. But, while we are ready to say Legislate, legislate! and Educate, educate, educate! we also say, above everything else, Regenerate, regenerate, regenerate!"⁴⁰

2. Prohibitionism and World War I

The prohibition movement grew out of the collectivisation of the Methodist world-view in the late 1870's, and very soon became the major symbol of New Zealand

Methodism's new response to the surrounding community. It was a surprisingly stable mixture of the older individualistic and the newer collectivistic directions of the necessity of proclaiming the Gospel. It retained the fervour of old Methodism, but redirected it in a direction more supportive of "positive community values".⁴¹ Other factors in the social development of New Zealand increased its acceptability. It was a sweeping response to a problem and/or evil (depending on one's viewpoint) of the pioneering society : public drunkenness. It gained momentum from the manifest social problems created and uncovered by the Long Depression. Finally, it coalesced into a political movement in a period when New Zealand society was seeking to use the political system in order to carry out the reforms that the Long Depression had made necessary; at this point, New Zealand was gradually becoming a settled society, with a degree of prosperity returning from the mid-1890's.

The rapid development of a prohibitionist sentiment within New Zealand Methodism is easily demonstrated from the resolutions and pastoral addresses of successive Wesleyan Conferences. In the early 1870's the Australasian Wesleyan Connexion began to take note of '...the terrible social and moral evils resulting from intemperance....'⁴² At first, legislative action was seen as an adjunct to 'moral suasion and the influence of Christian truth', but soon it became more prominent. The 1875 General Conference declared:

The Conference regards intemperance as amongst the most serious moral and social evils now prevalent, and urges the Methodist people to discountenance those customs of society which foster this vice, and to promote all legislative measures which aim at the restraint or extinction of the liquor traffic. Whilst asserting the Methodist Church to be itself a temperance society, the Conference cordially

recognises the services rendered to public morals and to religion by independent temperance and total abstinence associations. The Conference recommends Methodists to co-operate heartily with such associations, guarding themselves nevertheless from the error of allowing their sympathy with efforts directed against a special evil to weaken their relations with the church, or divert their attention from those wider Christian enterprises which are designed to rescue mankind, not ⁴³only from drunkenness, but from every form of sin.

Soon, following the example and form of British Wesleyan Methodism, the New Zealand Conference established a connexional temperance structure, consisting of Bands of Hope (for the instruction of children in temperance principles) and Circuit Temperance Organisations (for the promotion of ⁴⁴temperance and the removal of intemperance). In fact, both movements proved to be unsatisfactory. The Bands of Hope were never strong, and needed constant injections of connexional zeal in order to survive; the Circuit Temperance Organisations seem to have faded away very quickly, Methodists preferring to join other organisations specifically designed to pursue similar principles.

The stated objects of these institutions, however, give an extremely useful insight into the reasons that made prohibitionism popular in New Zealand Methodism. The Band of Hope was to be an institution training children in total abstinence in order to prevent prevalent drinking customs from blocking their progression from the Sunday school to church attendance and membership. It was thus '...to supply a need which has long been felt and acknowledged' ⁴⁵ through being an 'important auxiliary' to the pedagogic structure of the local church. But the inculcation of total abstinence was only part of a programme of moral and religious behaviour which was designed to secure adherence to the Church in adult

years.

Among the kindred objects designed to be secured by Bands of Hope are: The regular attendance of our young people upon public worship; the inculcation of the moral duties of industry, honesty, truthfulness, cleanliness, kindness; the discouragement of the practice of smoking; and the creation of disgust for all bad or offensive habits ⁴⁶Sabbath-breaking, swearing, gambling, and such like.

However, even then it was recognised that 'total abstinence is no substitute for Scriptural conversion'; so Methodists intended the Band of Hope to be '...only a means to the great end of winning souls for Christ, and of retaining them within the fold of his Church.' ⁴⁷Methodists recognised some of the dangers of the temperance movement, and hoped that it would become an aid to 'Scriptural conversion'; but it tended to become a substitute, threatening to replace sanctification with moralism.

The list of stated objects of the Circuit Temperance Organisation was long, and consisted of both the limiting of opportunities for drinking and the encouragement of temperance as a positive alternative. When this organisation was established, membership was open to abstainers and moderate drinkers, who were expected to co-operate to promote temperance. This "Gospel Temperance" movement became very popular with Methodists in the 1880's, and Gospel Temperance missionaries were welcomed warmly by the Wesleyan Connexion. But the emphasis on temperance was very soon transformed into an emphasis on abstinence, and then on prohibition. The 1884 Conference's pastoral address, after praising Methodist involvement in Total Abstinence Associations, urged '...the claims of a cause that inculcates self-denial for the sake of weaker brethren.' ⁴⁸By 1890, the prohibition campaign was well under way, and other moral campaigns followed closely in its

wake. The 1890 Conference's pastoral address placed the prohibition movement in the context of a vision of a redeemed society.

Evidence strengthens that the Church of Christ has really woke [sic] up to the far-reaching importance of this holy crusade. Public opinion is being educated to such an extent, not only with regard to Intemperance, but also to Gambling, Social Purity, and the complicated question of Capital and Labour, that the Christian Church must conscientiously take her part in the discussions and determinations of the best modes of prevention and cure. Complete prohibition of the liquor traffic, the total suppression of the gambling mania, and the perfect protection of the young and the weak, and the practical recognition of the brotherhood of our race, are questions of paramount interest and necessity. We hope our lives will be spared to see the extinction of the evils adverted. It will be cause of deepest joy when all foul evils, social iniquities, and every form of injustice are buried, never again to soil and blight this redeemed world of the Lord Jesus Christ.⁴⁹

At this point, it becomes necessary to give attention to Grigg's work on the prohibition movement again. To Grigg, it was a conservative, moralistic middle class movement substituting a single all-embracing reformist panacea for a properly rigorous analysis of the causes of contemporary social problems. Methodist evidence, at least, suggests that the movement was much more complex than this. To Grigg, the movement was at root individualistic: "It was basically a moral reform of the individual; it was certainly not a fundamental reform of the structure of society."⁵⁰ In support of this view, he quotes Rev W.C. Oliver, in his editorial capacity in 1899: "The social problems of poverty, discontent and misery were...rooted in moral evil. 'The regeneration of man's moral being must precede the regeneration of society.'⁵¹" And Methodists did believe so; for them, sin's corruption was not primarily social, but racial, embracing the whole of

mankind; social injustice was a result of this more basic curse.

But as the foregoing account has shown, prohibition was a collectivising element in Methodist history. This collectivisation was not complete; that would have been an ideological conversion too shattering for Methodists to accept. But Grigg tends to see prohibitionism from a broadly socialist viewpoint. This is quite legitimate, of course, but it gives his work an air of displeasure at the fact that prohibitionism was not a revolutionary socialist working class movement. This criticism may be too strong, but Grigg certainly overemphasises quite markedly the conservatism of the prohibition movement. His class-conscious analysis is too simplistic to explain fully the contemporary social situation.

Grigg's perception of a "middle class" may be taken as a useful starting point. Grigg himself acknowledges that it covers a socio-economic range so wide that definitional problems are raised; he calls for a more rigorous analysis of socio-economic differences within this class.⁵ Despite this, he appears to proceed on the assumption that differences within the middle "class" were minor compared with a fundamental ideological unity. His contentions will therefore be undermined if it can be shown that the unity was less significant, and the differences more significant, than he believes them to be. What does Methodist evidence indicate?

Grigg's thesis depends on the contention that the puritan middle class unity can be described as "conservative"; he believes that the Church's intention was

to maintain the essence of the "laissez-faire economic system", while removing its impurities.

While [the prohibitionists] were not prepared to advocate state intervention in the economy to any marked degree, nor were they prepared to advocate complete economic liberalism and social anarchy. Their advocacy of Christianity virtually forbade what would amount to a total ignoring of poverty and distress and immorality that surrounded them. What they proposed to do by means of no-license and prohibition was to give the people the right to decide for themselves the place of the "biggest curse" in society.⁵³

This view of the meaning of their advocacy of Christianity is both grudging and misleading. Take T.E. Taylor, for instance, a leader in the prohibition movement; his general social thought, always at heart influenced by the Methodism of his youth, was anything but "conservative":

...his opinions and policies as politician and social reformer were shaped by his determination to curb the power of capitalists, to resist capitalist-fomented wars and to raise the economic and social status of the workers of his own country.⁵⁴

But it might be objected that Taylor's views were too radical for most Methodists. There is some truth in this, but Taylor's views were not unrepresentative of the thoughts of leading Methodists, at least. On any showing, the kind of thought unfolded in the first section of this chapter was radical; its implementation would certainly have constituted a "revolution". Christian Socialism was not confined to a couple of prominent but maverick Presbyterian ministers; it was certainly widespread among the Methodist ministry. Its influence among the laity was far weaker, but since Methodist ministers made up a very important element in the prohibitionist agitation, it becomes quite clear that prohibitionism could embrace a very wide sweep of political opinion.

Grigg's assumptions have led him to misinterpret the prohibition movement. It is undeniable that there was a desire to stave off a violent revolution inspired by atheistic Socialism; but the advocacy of such a revolution was confined to a surprisingly limited group anyway. Much more important to working men was the establishment of a strong trade union movement, which effectively meant developing a stake in the contemporary social order. Furthermore, Christian Socialism must not be thought of as conservative because it was not the brand of Socialism which was acceptable to the contemporary working people. It is quite possible for ideologues of both middle and working classes to be much more radical than the ordinary people of those groups.

A further possibility is that Grigg has been deceived by an over-reliance on non-Methodist denominational sources. Were Baptists and Presbyterians generally more conservative than Methodists? This seems to have been the case after World War I; but the war altered the New Zealand political framework so much that a comparison may not be valid. Class consciousness may explain tensions such as this, but the religious context provides an answer of its own. Within the evangelical ranks, there was a deep cleavage between "pietists" and "social reformers".⁵⁵ This was capable of cutting right across all social (and denominational) boundaries. In London's East End, for instance, it was the sections of Evangelical Nonconformity focusing most fully on conversion which attracted the largest congregations.⁵⁶

From 1890 to 1914, statements on the temperance movement increasingly followed the fortunes of prohibitionism in the

political arena. These fortunes gradually improved, till the 1906 Conference was able to declare that '...the marked advance of the anti-liquor sentiment throughout the various churches is a pledge that the liquor traffic in this colony is doomed to extinction....'⁵⁷ The crusade developed an air of inevitability; the movement was an army marching towards a goal which would never be surrendered once it was attained. The opportunity to vote for National Prohibition was granted by the Licensing Amendment Act of 1910, and in the 1911 Licensing Poll, a vote of 55.42 per cent for National Prohibition was recorded. Since a three-fifths majority was required, National Prohibition could not become law; Methodists had officially opposed this 'unfair disadvantage' since 1909,⁵⁸ but nevertheless the 1911 poll was '...[hailed] as a promise of an ultimate dethronement of evil....'⁵⁹ Success would perhaps be granted at the 1914 Licensing Poll.

It did not come; instead, the vote for National Prohibition failed to reach even the fifty per cent sought by the prohibitionists as the decisive majority.⁶⁰ Grigg believes that this defeat spelled the end of an era of attempts to obtain social, economic, and moral reform through prohibition.⁶¹ Perhaps the prohibition movement would have slowly but surely died away after 1914 had conditions been normal; but the war intervened, giving the movement another decade of vigorous and almost successful agitation.

The war increased the emphasis on national efficiency in the prohibition campaign. Efficiency was necessary at all levels of society if the war was to be won; it was better for those employed in munitions factories and in transport, as

well as soldiers, to be sober because the national energies could be concentrated on waging war (besides increasing the prospects of securing God's blessing on the national effort). Methodists opposed efforts to introduce wet canteens into military camps,⁶¹ and protested strongly against the "treating" of soldiers in municipal public bars.⁶³ This problem led to a campaign to persuade the Government to pass legislation banning all "shouting", a campaign which succeeded in 1916.⁶⁴

More significant was the campaign to secure the early closing of hotel bars at 6 p.m. Methodists were able to point to the fact that restrictions had been placed on the sale of liquor in all countries involved in the war, including other parts of the British Empire.⁶⁵ They joined the campaign to secure this reform in 1916,⁶⁶ but this campaign achieved six o'clock closing only for women. W.J. Williams acknowledged that this measure was designed to curb sexual vice and the resultant venereal disease (and approved of these efforts, since venereal disease among the soldiers proved to be troublesome during the war), but was nevertheless incensed.⁶⁷

The prohibitionist response to this defeat was to organise a much larger agitation in 1917. There were strong hopes of success. Williams exulted over the proposal of a deputation of liquor traders to reduce the hours of sale by two hours in the morning and one hour at night; it showed that they 'have had the scare of their lives.'⁶⁸ More good news soon arrived. The National Efficiency Board, charged to inquire into the relation of the liquor trade to the economic

well-being of the country, and composed of businessmen, tabled its report in Parliament in July 1917. It recommended a referendum on the issue of national prohibition with compensation, to be taken at the earliest possible time; and, whether or not the recommendation of a referendum was accepted, it recommended immediate legislation to enact six o'clock closing.⁶⁹ Despite expressions of suspicion of what the National Government might do to the recommendations,⁷⁰ early closing was promptly enacted, and Massey promised to allow a referendum on the "bare majority" principle within six months.⁷¹ Williams gloried in the triumph:

Once more our hearts beat high with hope for the future of this beautiful young country, for the action of September 20 was symptomatic of the ascendancy of that better, nobler spirit which will bring within its sweep reforms far more comprehensive than six o'clock closing. Very reverently and very fervently do we say, to God be all the glory!⁷²

In fact, it was over eighteen months before the referendum was held, to the disappointment of Methodists. They were particularly concerned to do their utmost to ensure that the soldiers would return to an alcohol-free New Zealand. They failed to secure this, but they were pleased that the Government moved to close all public bars for twenty-four hours within a fifteen mile radius when a transport or hospital ship arrived at a New Zealand port in 1919.⁷³ However, the success of the early closing campaign put new heart into the prohibitionist ranks; drink remained an unbeaten enemy at the end of the war,⁷⁴ but the poll recommended by the National Efficiency Board was to be taken on April 10, 1919.

There was a strong sense of confidence in the prohibitionist ranks. They saw this special poll as the

decisive poll - with good reason, for at the next Licensing Poll, State Purchase and Control would be made a third option, with no change to the present policy unless one issue secured an absolute majority; prohibitionists felt that this would effectively ensure the survival of the liquor trade by default. There was a little more than religious rhetoric in
⁷⁵
 Rev Percy I. Cooke's warning:

If we fail I fear the future, for God has said, "I will be with you no more except ye destroy the accursed from among you." You remember the awful condemnation on the Children of Israel when they failed to go forward into the Promised Land. God said, "Go back again by way of the Red Sea." "Go back". God save us from that cruel defeat, for if we fail to go forward it will certainly be a case of going back again by the way of the "Red Sea", red, red, by the life's blood of our children in the days to come.⁷⁶

Nevertheless, prohibitionists not only felt that they could win, but that they would win. Williams quoted Deborah's curse on the inhabitants of Meroz for refusing to help the Lord (i.e. the Israelites) to defeat the Canaanites,⁷⁷ and drew the analogy from the fact that the Israelites won anyway:

Never was such an heroic fight put up against the liquor traffic as that which will gain its climax on April 10; not to be among such fighters what can it be but an offence in the sight of God and man? The shout of victory will be the knell of despair for those who might have shared in the struggle but chose rather to sit still.⁷⁸

Williams felt that too many advantages had miraculously accrued to the prohibitionists to be coincidental, particularly in securing the opportunity in the first place;
⁷⁹
 it was 'a gift from God in answer to prayer'. 'Our faith is submitted to the severest test it has ever known, but if our works are in harmony with our faith it will emerge triumphant.'⁸⁰

The failure to secure prohibition was therefore deeply disappointing. The civilian population voted narrowly for prohibition; but over eighty percent of the soldiers voted for continuance, which left the situation in its previous position.⁸¹ Prohibitionists looked for the best features in a heart-rending defeat; a turnover of only just over 5000 votes would reverse the result in December 1919, and prohibitionists who had not voted because of the compensation clauses would vote for prohibition without compensation. The introduction of the third issue was a great difficulty, but not insurmountable; the soldiers had voted as they did because they had been duped by false pleas, but they would see through those pleas on their return and reverse their votes.⁸² So prohibitionists maintained their campaign throughout the rest of 1919. They had the moral support of a successful prohibition movement in the United States of America to inspire them. H.J. Allen, Governor of Kansas, exulted in this victory, and expressed great hopes for the future.

National prohibition is here to stay.... [...] It is now but a question of a few years until the entire world, appreciating the economic and moral effect of enforced sobriety, will follow our lead.⁸³

New Zealand Methodists certainly hoped that this was so.

The outcome of the Licensing Poll in December 1919 was therefore even more depressing. The addition of the third option made the opposition too tough for the prohibitionists; but National Prohibition failed to secure an absolute majority by only a little over 3000 votes.⁸⁴ Williams confessed his perplexity, but claimed, perhaps not unreasonably, that the increased proximity to victory augured well for the next Licensing Poll, which was held in 1922. By

this time, Williams had retired from his editorial office, and had been replaced by Rev J. Napier Milne, who was on loan from the British Wesleyan Methodist Conference in the immediate post-war years. Using the perspective of an outsider, Milne indulged in prophecy: 'If prohibition be not won at the polls this year, it will not be won for a decade. It may be two decades. It may be longer.'⁸⁵ He gave, as his reason for the prediction, the large influx of immigrants from the "wet" countries of Britain; these immigrants would be unlikely to vote for prohibition in the future. When National Prohibition failed by over 16,000 votes to secure an absolute majority, Milne declared that 'The reverse is a bad one', and stuck to his original prophecy; a new generation⁸⁶ opposed to prohibition was growing up. W.J. Williams⁸⁷ publicly criticised Milne's pessimism, but Milne was right; the power had gone out of the prohibition movement. When the next Licensing Poll occurred in 1925, the Methodist Times took much less notice of it; Methodist enthusiasm for prohibition was waning.

That the years of the growing strength and influence of the prohibition movement had passed is symbolised in the ages in 1922 of the Methodist ministers who had been most closely⁸⁸ identified with the movement. Frank Isitt was dead, but would have been seventy-six had he lived; Leonard Isitt, his younger brother, was sixty-seven; John Dawson was sixty-three; W.J. Williams was seventy-five. When T.E. Taylor, who died in 1911 but would have been sixty had he lived, is added to this group, it becomes clear that prohibitionism captured the hearts of a generation that was nearing the end of its public life. Of course, most movements of any considerable

influence and longevity tend to be led by older people; but most of these men had been at the forefront of the movement for over thirty years, and it was under their leadership that prohibitionism emerged as a significant social movement in the late nineteenth century.

However, the political failure of prohibitionism became evident at a time when Methodism was under siege in other areas as well. Williams had symbolised, and been influential among, a generation which had aimed at a vision of Methodism which was united and aggressive in a progressively righteous society. After forty years of strenuous activity towards the realisation of this vision, the only positive result was the achievement of Methodist Union - a matter of ecclesiastical reform. Wider social and moral reforms required the readjustment of the social and political framework of the nation with the acquiescence and support of its populace. By 1922, the Liberal Party as a political outlet to social and moral reform was moribund, and Methodist reformism needed new outlets and new approaches.

3. Methodism in the Political Wilderness

New Zealand Methodism, in being in a kind of political wilderness by 1920, reflects quite strikingly the pattern of British Nonconformity. In Britain, the power and influence of both the Nonconformist Churches and the Liberal Party were waning. The same thing happened in New Zealand. But this does not necessarily mean that the same factors were at work in both cases. There was a long tradition of sectarian religious division in British life that was not matched in New Zealand. Without an Established Church, New Zealand

lacked the possibility (and, to a large extent, the need) of an alliance between Nonconformity and Liberalism similar to that which, in Britain, offset the former's social and political disabilities. The difference can be exaggerated; Britishers emigrated with these indoctrinated cultural divisions, and did not cease to be aware of their former social position in Britain simply by leaving Britain's shores. But the different nature of New Zealand society provided opportunities to prosper that had been lacking in Britain, and thus could remove some of the sting from old social disadvantages. This section will offer a tentative explanation of the political crisis of New Zealand Methodism in this period; further research is needed to bring out the political allegiance of Methodist clergy and laity alike.

New Zealand was not a land of opportunity for everyone; in the 1880's there had been considerable unemployment and social tension, which had crystallised in the Maritime Strike and the General Election of 1890. It was an uncomfortable reminder of the worst problems of British society; thus there was plenty of scope for Methodist reformism in New Zealand society and politics at the turn of the century. As shown in the first section of this chapter, this reformism was socially conciliatory, and so Liberal measures like the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Bill were welcomed.⁸⁹ Furthermore, the relatively undeveloped state of class-conscious party politics in the 1890's, with the political dominance of centrist Liberalism under Seddon, allowed much greater range for single-issue and moralist politics than existed later. It was a period of moderate yet wide-ranging reform; there seemed to be no reason why it would not

continue.

Yet it did not continue. By 1910, the Liberal Party had stagnated, and was no longer able to hold together both its left-wing and right-wing affiliations. By 1920, it was clearly decaying, and with the ascendancy of the Reform Party, hopes of moral and social reform were being dampened. Methodist reformism had lost its political outlet. The Labour Party of 1919 was not an alternative, since it was too class-conscious and socialistically militant.

This dilemma illustrates the tensions and contradictions within Methodist reformism. Its social stance was not consistently class-based; it was sometimes radical, sometimes moderate, and sometimes conservative. Prohibition, despite the sweeping nature of the reform, was a conservative solution to social problems. Yet Methodists were inclined to see it as the first of a number of rather radical social reforms which would be necessary after the war. These reforms were often of a far-reaching nature. Rev Charles B. Jordan was one of a group of younger ministers who were⁹¹ hailed as 'radical' by Methodist leaders. Representative of his views was an article written soon after the war, in which he proposed profit-sharing in order '...to escape, peacefully and in an orderly fashion, from the pernicious wages system with which our civilisation has become entangled.'⁹² He thought that the 'great need' would be 'to educate and Christianise the employers' so that they would carry this out for the benefit of all classes. Jordan's measure can only be termed "revolutionary", yet he specifically repudiated another way of eliminating the wages system, which emphasised trade unionism, industrial action by

the workers, and class warfare.

This article demonstrates confusion over the social and political position of Methodism at a number of levels. Such arguments were anathema to class-conscious socialists expecting industrial action to secure for them the economic and social improvements that they wanted. But this does not mean that the arguments were 'conservative', or even 'moderate'. Jordan advocated a reorganisation of the national economic structure through a means far more drastic than the Labour Party has ever attempted to carry out since then.

The objection might be raised, however, that Jordan's views were those of a young maverick radical in the Methodist ministry. This overlooks the fact that the Methodist hierarchy had been advocating profit-sharing for over thirty years; W.J. Williams did so during the Maritime Strike in 1890.⁹³ The truth is that, as with the question of Church Union,⁹⁴ the opinions of the younger ministers - the so-called 'radicals' - simply echoed the views of the older leaders of the denomination. It was the older generation who held the power in the Connexion, and it was they whose influence was decisive in the formation of Methodist opinion on various subjects. To go back even further in Methodist history, Jordan's views expounded traditional Methodist social theory, which advocated peaceful social change of sufficient magnitude to stave off any threat of violent revolution.

The official Methodist attitude to social reform can be gauged from that section of the special recommendations of the Welfare of the Church Committee, made to the Centenary Conference of 1922, which pronounced on social and economic

matters.⁹⁵ In later years, these recommendations became standing resolutions of the Conference, and became known as the "Social Creed of the Church". Methodist views of the social order combined many often contradictory elements. The first point affirmed 'The sacredness of human personality and the equal value of all men in the sight of God.'⁹⁶ Having laid the foundation, Methodists sought reforms that would grant a living wage, decent conditions of labour, for women and 'young people', a weekly day of rest, reasonable hours of labour and sufficient holidays and leisure periods. All this added up to '...the removal of the root causes of poverty and unemployment.'⁹⁷

The means of securing such a revolution in the national life emphasised peace, order, and legality rather than violence. Methodists sought '...constitutional means of securing redress of grievances and of promoting industrial and social reforms.'⁹⁸ This was intended to make industry operate not on the competitive principle 'for personal gain', but on the co-operative principle 'for the service of the needs of the Community.' This co-operative socialism was truly 'radical', yet able to discern faults in, and require better standards of, all groups. Methodists found it their duty to condemn not only '...the practice of sweating the worker and of exploiting the consumer...'⁹⁹ but also 'scamped work and restricted output'; they required the 'best service the worker can render'. To Methodists, moral causes of 'poverty and unemployment' were as significant as economic causes; 'vice, waste and extravagance' were as meddlesome as '...those causes relating to the purely economic aspects of trade and education.'¹⁰⁰

This stance - centrist yet radical, liberal yet sweeping, co-operative yet revolutionary - found its justification in

...the fact that in the message and mission of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ - a message of goodwill and of brotherhood - will be found the only power for promoting effectively the reconstruction and regeneration of society. Hence we seek to secure the recognition of the Golden Rule and of the Mind of Christ, as the supreme law of society and the sure remedy for all social ills.¹⁰¹

Two things should be noted of such a statement. Firstly, it was very perceptive in combining the collectivistic requirement of 'reconstruction' with the individualistic requirement of 'regeneration'. Secondly, it was very naive in believing that society would be willing to recognise the 'Golden Rule' and the 'Mind of Christ'. The liberal optimism of the pre-war years had emerged triumphant in the post-war Methodist hierarchy; whether it would find general acceptability and appeal among the New Zealand public was another question.

The exposition of traditional Methodist theory, even in a pacifically revolutionary form, illustrates the position which Methodists sought to uphold in a society which seemed to be increasingly riven by class conflict. In the period of general uncertainty immediately after the war, there were widespread fears of an outbreak of class warfare. There seemed to be an increasingly militantly class-conscious polarisation in New Zealand society; the socialists seemed to be bent on a confrontation with the conservatives, who held political power as well as economic power. The Russian Revolution had occurred in 1917, and W.J. Williams had constantly predicted that the result would be only evil; he never had high hopes of the ability of Atheistic Socialism to

Table 9.1: Ministerial Standing of Chairmen
of Districts 1899-1933¹

Period	Completed Years (per cent)		
	-20	20-29	30+
1899-1905	0.00	50.00	50.00
1906-1912	2.38	33.33	64.29
1913-1919	2.86	37.14	60.00
1920-1926	0.00	53.97	46.03
1927-1933	6.35	39.68	53.97
Average 1874-1953	10.33	40.82	48.85

Source: MCNZ, 1899-1933

1. Tables 9.1 and 9.2 refer to ministers in Connexion with the Wesleyan Methodist and Methodist Churches.
-

create harmony, order, and peace, and his worst fears were apparently confirmed.¹⁰² A moderate, liberal mainstream which would keep the peace seemed to have disappeared from New Zealand society and politics. As a result, New Zealand Methodists were forced to look elsewhere for a political outlet for their reformism.

These problems were reinforced by a generational pattern within New Zealand Methodism. Statistics show that the Connexion was still dominated by an older generation of ministers. The high administrative posts in New Zealand Methodism were filled between 1906 and 1919 almost exclusively by men who had been in active pastoral work for over twenty years, and in a majority of cases for over thirty years, as Table 9.1 shows. The figures for ministers in active pastoral work for over twenty-five years show a

Table 9.2: Ministerial Standing of Chairmen
of Districts 1899-1933

Period	Completed Years (per cent)		
	-25	25-34	35+
1899-1905	14.28	69.05	16.67
1906-1912	7.14	47.62	45.24
1913-1919	17.14	42.86	40.00
1920-1926	19.05	60.32	20.63
1927-1933	19.05	49.20	31.75
Average 1874-1953	25.74	48.36	25.90

Sources: MCNZ, 1899-1933

slightly less pronounced trend; but over eighty per cent of such ministers occupied the high administrative posts in each decade. However, as Table 9.2 shows, it was between 1906 and 1919 that ministers in active pastoral work for over thirty-five years figured most significantly in these high administrative posts. Measured either way, the overall pattern became the norm in post-war Methodism; what makes it significant between 1913 and 1919 is that the generation who entered the pastoral work between 1870 and 1884 had in fact already held power, in some cases, for well over twenty years. They were very capable men who had risen quickly in a young and small ministry; they continued to hold power in their later years in a much larger and more evenly balanced ministry. Apart from Chairmen of Districts, which Tables 9.1 and 9.2 record, other major posts reveal the same trend. W.J. Williams entered in 1870, and was the Connexional Editor from 1913 to 1922; Samuel Lawry entered in 1877, and was

Table 9.3: Ministerial Standing of Active Ministers¹
1913-1925

	Completed Years									Total
	0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40+	
1913	34	25	23	18	14	16	13	13	10	166
1914	25	26	25	15	16	15	12	11	9	152
1915	30	26	23	17	17	14	12	12	8	159
1916	29	25	21	21	18	15	7	9	11	156
1917	26	31	21	23	19	14	10	8	12	164
1918	23	27	23	23	17	15	13	6	9	156
1919	27	28	22	25	16	14	14	6	7	159
1920	23	27	23	22	18	15	12	5	5	150
1921	18	24	24	22	22	17	13	5	3	148
1922	18	25	28	19	23	19	11	8	3	154
1923	18	26	24	21	24	15	11	10	2	151
1924	24	24	27	20	23	14	13	9	2	156
1925	25	21	26	22	22	16	14	7	4	157

Source: MCNZ, 1913-25

1. Refers to ministers in Connexion with the Methodist Church.

Connexional Secretary from 1911 to 1927; C.H. Garland entered in 1881, and was Principal of the Theological College from 1912 to his death in 1918; and Thomas G Brooke entered in 1881, and was Organising Secretary of the Home Mission Department from 1909 to 1923. But the longest-serving man of them all was Joseph H. Simmonds; he entered in 1869, and was Principal of Wesley College from 1895 to 1923.

The significance of these trends is confirmed by noting trends in the composition of the active ministry during this period. The General Returns show that the number of ministers and probationers dropped by twenty-six between 1914 and 1919. But Table 9.3 shows that considerable numbers remained in the active ministry beyond forty years of service during the war. Their influence, already considerable, was

increased by the huge proportion of active ministers (mostly young) who went to the war; but of course, the absence of these men was the main reason why the older men delayed their superannuation anyway. Once the war was over, large numbers quickly superannuated, seemingly almost glad to retire.

Thus during the war years, an older generation, perhaps sometimes a little unwillingly, was in power within New Zealand Methodism. Whether or not any kind of ideological generation gap existed, this generation certainly felt that such a gap existed. In the next decade, some young men were appointed to very important positions. Charles H. Olds,¹⁰⁴ who entered in 1910, became the Organising Secretary of the Sunday School and Young People's Department in 1919; E. Thomas Olds,¹⁰⁵ who entered in 1915, became Assistant Superintendent of the Home Mission Department in 1925, and was followed in 1931 by George I. Laurensen,¹⁰⁶ who entered in 1927.

This concern with an ideological generation gap did have a basis in fact during this period. However, the gap concerned not so much the social and moral ends of New Zealand Methodism as the political means through which to gain the ends. With the demise of the Liberal Party, a situation emerged where those hoping for further reforms of a moderate, or even radical, nature had their expectations thwarted. The frustrations, and the consequently redirected ambitions, led to an episode in New Zealand history that is very revealing in discerning the wartime and post-war political reorientation of the New Zealand population - the rise of the Protestant Political Association.¹⁰⁷

There was a vein of anti-Catholic feeling in nineteenth

century New Zealand society which was liable to erupt into sectarian agitation when conditions were suitable. The middle of World War I was such a period, and H.S. Moores has analysed the combination of forces that made this outbreak of anti-Catholic sectarianism the most spectacular and virulent in New Zealand history. The immediate cause of the conflicts was the conjunction in 1916 of three great controversies¹⁰ which were of grave concern to the Roman Catholic Church. But the forces of sectarianism could not have been unleashed had not the political position of New Zealand Protestantism been responsive to extremist agitation. There was always a conservative element in New Zealand Protestantism; Moores views the Reform Party as an important outlet for this element.¹⁰⁹ But it should also be noted that this "conservative element" was not confined to a minority of Protestants whose politics were conservative; it also existed among other Protestants whose politics were liberal, or even radical (though not necessarily socialist). Ingrained in New Zealand Protestantism was a respect for the social stability of the nation and an opposition to any groups who threatened to overturn the social order. Generally speaking, New Zealand Protestants had access to the sources of political power, and were anxious to uphold the forces that upheld the contemporary social, economic, and political order.

But this by no means meant that New Zealand Protestantism dominated the political life of New Zealand. The very strength of the prohibition movement demonstrated both that New Zealand Protestants were not entirely satisfied with the New Zealand social order, and that they had considerable political influence, though not enough to secure

their ends. If prohibitionism was not already an extremist solution to social problems within New Zealand, the movement's inability to succeed produced frustrations rendering Protestants vulnerable to bouts of extremist excess. The decline of the Liberal Party and the political ascendancy of the Reform Party blocked the traditional outlets of Protestant reformism; yet Protestants of this period could not and would not wait for more favourable political circumstances. This was partly caused by the self-righteousness of Protestant political movements, with the ever-present danger of fanaticism. But this self-righteousness was fuelled by the apparently increasing danger of an atheistic socialist revolution. New Zealand Protestants were well aware that social reforms were required in New Zealand, and, at least officially, were beginning to range themselves on the labour side in social conflicts. (This does not mean that the Labour movement always welcomed their aid.) Thus Protestants had an urgent sense of the necessity of reform in order to prevent revolution. It is highly significant that Rev Howard Elliott, the Auckland Baptist preacher who eventually led the Protestant Political Association, had high hopes of the formation of a Christian Socialist (rather than an Atheistic Socialist) Labour Party to carry out the necessary reforms; these hopes had been dashed just before the war.¹¹⁰ Moderate reformism was very popular among Protestants at this time, and yet it was deprived of any political outlet.

In this situation, the latent sectarianism of Elliott's theological conservatism reasserted itself, and gained an admixture of apocalypticism from the reaction to wartime

strains on moderate reformist optimism.¹¹¹ The combination of all the various personal, social, political, and religious factors led to the formation of the Protestant Political Association. Methodists were certainly not immune to this anti-Catholic political movement; Moores names, as early supporters, Rev C.H. Garland and G. Knowles Smith.¹¹² The situation of 1916 finally goaded W.J. Williams into sectarian journalism in the Methodist Times in late 1916,¹¹³ and this journal had an enthusiastic lay correspondent, E.V. Laws.

Moores believes that the religious conservatism of the Protestant Political Association finally developed into political conservatism as it became imperative to join forces with the Reform Party, which was the political group most clearly opposed to any revolutionary threat.¹¹⁴ It seems very possible that at this time, a considerable number of Methodist laypeople made such a switch of political allegiance. The mood of the time was certainly favourable to it; the optimism of the reformist political tradition had had its credibility severely damaged by the war, and there now seemed to be no centrist alternative to revolution. In any case, those who retained their Liberal allegiance increasingly became numbered among the conservatives as the political viability of the Liberal remnant evaporated; the resultant merger of the 1930's that created the National Party mixed moderate and conservative, and perhaps even some radical, elements.

With the collapse of the Liberal political option, a different, and probably younger, generation found their way into the Labour political camp. It must be noted that this required no ideological conversion; younger Methodists

carried their radical, and even moderate, Liberalism with them into the Labour Party. Two factors seem to have made Labour an acceptable alternative. Firstly, only the Labour Party held out a genuine possibility of social reform; and secondly, the immediate post-war years represented the peak of the class tension and polarisation within New Zealand society. By the 1930's, the Liberal political tradition had been split, but it was reasserting itself in both the Labour and National Parties.

Further research is needed to discover the political realignment of Methodist groups within this period, but it is clear that this cleavage was practical rather than ideological. It was a question of which political tradition seemed to be most representative of the liberal Methodist vision of society. However, the cleavage did allow the possibility of the development of a real ideological generation gap within Methodism; such a gap eventually appeared, with the development of a significant absolute pacifist minority within the Methodist Church, particularly the ordained ministry. Briefly, it must be noted that almost¹¹⁵ all the pacifists in 1939 were under thirty-five; furthermore, the Connexion was ruled in World War 2 by a group of men who had entered the ministry almost entirely before World War I, and in many cases only a few years after the turn of the century.

The growing collectivism of the later nineteenth century had its impact on Methodist social theory, and after 1880, Methodists became acutely aware of the need and possibility of collective solutions to social problems. However, they

did not abandon their individualistic inheritance, but instead applied it to social and moral problems. This combination of collectivism and individualism, at a time when Methodism was increasingly becoming politicised, produced the prohibition movement. But by 1922, prohibition had passed its peak, without gaining political success. This failure was linked to the demise of the Liberal Party; in a period of class tension and polarisation, Methodists were forced to seek new political channels for their liberal vision of society. Thus they participated in the development of the liberal influence in both Labour and the National Parties.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER 9

- 1 'Why the Working Man does not Go to Church', A, 29/5/1897, p.527.
- 2 Ibid., pp527-8
- 3 Gilbert, A.D. Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change 1740-1914, London, Longman, 1976, p.60. For a statistical explanation of occupational areas of Methodist strength and the Methodist participation in the statistical pattern of Evangelical Nonconformity, see *ibid.*, pp.61-7.
- 4 Wesley noted in his later years, disapprovingly, the tendency for new Methodist wealth to damage and destroy the Methodist piety which had aided its accumulation (*Ibid.*, p.159).
- 5 See Gilbert's analysis of "the Victorian crisis of faith" (*ibid.*, pp176-84, especially pp.181-2).
- 6 *Ibid.*, pp.60-1
- 7 *Ibid.*, p.162. On the social changes, see *ibid.*, pp.145-9; on the denominationalisation of Methodism, see *ibid.*, pp.149-56, 158-62.
- 8 'Why the Working Classes do not Go to Church', A, 1/1/1898, p.850. The essay was actually reprinted in the Advocate twice, the version given here being a second and fuller version. But the first version (A, 22/5/1897, pp.516-7) included parts of the essay left out of the second version; where appropriate, the first version will be cited.
- 9 A, 22/5/1897, p.516
- 10 *Ibid.*, p.517.
- 11 A, 1/1/1898, p.850.
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 Davies, R.E., Methodism, rev.ed., London, Epworth Press, 1976, p.128.
- 15 Currie calls his doctrine of the ministry "pure Buntingism" (Currie, p.167).
- 16 Entered the ministry in 1883; Acting-Principal of the Theological College in 1919; became a Supernumerary in 1920.
- 17 'The Fatherhood of God', NZMT, 2/2/1918, p.6.
- 18 *Ibid.*
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 Currie, p.251.
- 21 'The Socialism of Jesus Christ' (sermon), O, 1/2/1908, p.25. Text: Matthew 6:7, Reprinted from the Christian World Pulpit.
- 22 "B", 'Christianity and Socialism', NZW, 1/11/1879, p.243.
- 23 *Ibid.*
- 24 *Ibid.*
- 25 "W.P.", 'The Social Ethics of Christianity', NZW, 2/12/1878, p.265.
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 *Ibid.*, pp.265-6. Text quoted: Matthew 7:12.

- 28 Ibid., p.265.
 29 Ibid., p.266
 30 "J.T.P.", 'Socialism and Christianity', O,
 4/4/1903, p.26.
 31 Ibid.
 32 '"Socialism and Christianity" (by "J.T.P.")'
 (correspondence), O, 23/5/1903, p.28.
 33 'Socialism, Individualism, and "J.T.P."', O,
 12/9/1903, p.27.
 34 "J.T.P.", 'Socialism and Christianity', O,
 6/6/1903, p.26.
 35 Ibid., p.27.
 36 "J.T.P.", 'Socialism, Christianity, and
 "J.T.P."', O, 15/8/1903, p.26
 37 For the following, see O, 13/2/1904, pp.32-3,
 Reprinted from the Christian Guardian.
 38 Ibid., p.33.
 39 A, 1/1/1898, p.850
 40 Wright, D., 'The Church and the Working Man'
 (paper), O, 27/5/1905, p.22. Quoted from The
Philanthropy of God.
 41 Lineham, p.7.
 42 MACA, 1872, p.62.
 43 MGCA, 1875, p.49.
 44 MCNZ, 1878, pp.37-40.
 45 Ibid., p.37.
 46 Ibid.
 47 Ibid., p.39.
 48 Morley, W., and Bull, H., MCNZ, 1884, p.74.
 Rev Henry Bull's career: entered the ministry
 in 1868; President in 1886; Connexional
 Secretary 1902-10; Chairman of the District
 five times; became a Supernumerary in 1911.
 49 Lewis, J.J., and Lee, W., MCNZ, 1890, p.71.
 Rev John J. Lewis' career: entered the
 ministry in 1870; President in 1890; Chairman
 of the District six times; became a
 Supernumerary in 1919. Rev William Lee's
 career: entered the ministry in 1864;
 President in 1880; Chairman of the District
 seventeen times; became a Supernumerary in
 1907.
 50 Grigg, p.49.
 51 "Prohibition, the Church and Labour: A
 Programme for Social Reform, 1890-1914",
NZJH, vol.15, no.2, October 1981, p.135;
 quotation from A, 6/5/1899, p.517.
 52 'The Attack on the Citadels of Liquordom',
 p.6.
 53 Ibid., p.52
 54 Macleod, p.31.
 55 See Inglis, pp.304-8
 56 McLeod, H., Class and Religion in the Late
Victorian City, London, Croom Helm, 1974,
 p.117.
 57 MCNZ, 1906, p.67.
 58 MCNZ, 1909, p.75.
 59 Ready, W., and Lawry, S., Pastoral Address,
MCNZ, 1912, p.27.
 60 For reasons for the 1914 reversal, see 'The

- Attack on the Citadels of Liquordom', pp.326-30.
- 61 Ibid., pp.330-1
- 62 See 'Dry Canteens' (editorial note), NZMT, 1/4/1916, p.2; MCNZ, 1916, p.57.
- 63 'Soldiers and Drink' (editorial note), MCNZ, 22/1/1916, pp.1-2.
- 64 See MCNZ, 1916, p.57; 'Anti-Shouting' (editorial note), NZMT 1/4/1916, p.2; 'Anti-Shouting' (editorial note), NZMT, 5/8/1916, pp.1-2.
- 65 'Six O'Clock Closing' (editorial note), NZMT, 1/4/1916, p.2; on early closing in New South Wales, 'Victory for Early Closing' (editorial note), NZMT, 24/6/1916, pp.1-2.
- 66 MCNZ, 1916, p.57; 'Close the Bars at Six O'Clock; (editorial), NZMT, 13/5/1916, p.8.
- 67 'Six O'Clock Closing for Women' (editorial note), NZMT, 2/9/1916, p.1.
- 68 'The Liquor Deputation' (editorial note), NZMT, 4/8/1917, p.1.
- 69 'Report of the National Efficiency Board on the Liquor Question', NZMT, 18/8/1917, p.3.
- 70 Cocker, J., 'What will the Government Do?' NZMT, 18/8/1917, p.3; and 'Sir Joseph Ward and the Liquor Party', NZMT, 1/9/1917, p.13.
- 71 'The Six O'Clock Victory' (editorial), NZMT, 29/9/1917, p.8.
- 72 Ibid.
- 73 MCNZ, 1919, p.58
- 74 'An Unbeaten Enemy' (editorial note), NZMT, 23/11/1918, p.2.
- 75 Entered the ministry in 1915; became a Supernumerary in 1952.
- 76 'Destroy the Accursed Thing among you' (sermon), NZMT, 29/3/1919, p.9. Text: Joshua 7:12-13. Texts quoted: Joshua 7:12, Numbers 14:25. Note that this was fairly standard Methodist prohibitionist rhetoric.
- 77 Judges 5:2
- 78 'The Curse of Meroz' (editorial), NZMT, 18/1/1919, p.8; emphasis added.
- 79 'A Dry New Zealand Next July' (editorial), NZMT, 21/12/1918, p.8.
- 80 'Shall the Slayer be Slain? The Answer of April 10' (editorial), NZMT, 29/3/1919, p.8.
- 81 'The Licensing Referendum', NZMT, 5/7/1919, p.9.
- 82 See 'The Licensing Referendum' (editorial note), NZMT, 21/6/1919, p.2; 'Doped with Lies' (editorial note), NZMT, 10/5/1919, p.1.
- 83 'World Prohibition Only a Question of a Few Years', NZMT, 27/9/1919, p.13. Reprinted from the Kansas City Times.
- 84 '"Baffled to Fight Better"' (editorial), NZMT, 17/1/1920, p.8.
- 85 'Pertinent Prohibition Paragraphs', NZMT, 28/10/1922, p.9.
- 86 'We have Lost with God', NZMT, 23/12/1922, p.16.

- 87 'The Licensing Poll' (correspondence), NZMT, 6/1/1923, p.3.
- 88 Entered the ministry in 1870; became a Supernumerary in 1911.
- 89 'The Industrial Conciliation Bill' (editorial), NZM, 8/7/1893, p.6.
- 90 Entered the ministry in 1908; became a Supernumerary in 1948.
- 91 Coming of Age, p.28.
- 92 'A Christian Economic Ideal', NZMT, 7/1/1922, p.11. This article was published in five consecutive issues: 17/12/1921, p.11; 7/1/1922, p.11; 21/1/1922, p.13; 4/2/1922, p.3; 18/2/1922, p.7.
- 93 'Social Wrongs and Remedies' (editorial), NZMT, 13/9/1890, p.4.
- 94 See above, Ch.8, p.245
- 95 See MCNZ, 1922, pp.75-6
- 96 Ibid., p.75.
- 97 Ibid., p.76.
- 98 Ibid., p.75
- 99 Ibid.
- 100 Ibid.
- 101 Ibid.
- 102 It is interesting to note that during this period, Williams made many predictions of the future course of national and international affairs in the social and political spheres. This was one of the very rare instances when he was right. It is very likely that he had excellent information concerning events in Russia; his journalist son, Harold, was an expert on Russian affairs who had married a Russian lady.
- 103 Wesley College was originally intended to provide theological training as well as schooling for Maori boys. Gradually the former purpose was separated from Wesley College and provided for in its own right. This left a bleak prospect for what remained, but Simmonds was an able man who carried through the scheme that eventually led to the reconstruction of Wesley College on a new site at Paerata in 1927 (see Out of the Common Way, pp.79, 127-8).
- 104 Entered the ministry in 1910; President in 1943; Organising Secretary of the Connexional Sunday School and Young People's Department 1919-21; Chairman of the District fifteen times; became a Supernumerary in 1951.
- 105 Entered the ministry in 1915; President in 1948-9; Assistant Secretary of the Home Mission Department 1925-7; Chairman of the District thirteen times; became a Supernumerary in 1957.
- 106 Entered the ministry in 1927; Assistant Superintendent of the Home Mission Department 1932-8; General Superintendent of the Home Mission Department 1939-63; President in 1952; became a Supernumerary in

- 1967.
- 107 See, on this subject, H.S. Moores, 'The Rise of the Protestant Political Association', Auckland, University of Auckland, 1966 (unpublished M.A. thesis).
- 108 Ibid., pp55-74.
- 109 Ibid., pp.42-4.
- 110 Ibid., pp.103-4, 106-8.
- 111 Ibid., pp.108-11.
- 112 Ibid., pp.219-21
- 113 His first contribution in this direction was 'Who Are the Catholics?' (editorial note), NZMT, 25/11/1916, p.1.
- 114 Moores, pp308-14.
- 115 Coming of Age, p.87.

CHAPTER X
MAKING PEACE

Methodist attitudes to the peace that was to end World War 1 are very revealing in the examination of the crisis in New Zealand Methodism. Methodism would have reached this crisis anyway, because processes that were unfavourable to the Church's witness and influence were developing. But the intrusion of the war helped to determine the specific nature of the crisis. The combination of these two factors was instrumental in determining Methodist views of what international peace would involve. The passage of time has lent an air of unreality to these views; part of the reason for New Zealand Methodism's inability to cope with the problems of the post-war New Zealand society was simply that an unrealistic view of the meaning of the past decade's events for human life and human history dominated the ministerial hierarchy at this time.

Methodist responses to the requirements of renewed international peace followed two broad lines, which can be divided with reasonable ease, but which supplemented each other fairly closely. Firstly, ideas of the meaning of international peace arose from the pre-war liberalism in both theology and social theory. The facile optimism of that pre-war period was severely shaken by the war, but emerged triumphant, though chastened considerably, among those groups which were to formulate Methodist opinion in the next two decades. Secondly, the development of the holy war explanation of this conflict shaped attitudes to the diplomatic readjustments that were necessary for true international peace to ensue. The horrific idiocy of these

views is easily lambasted, but it was a new kind of war, of which more adequate understanding has developed only slowly in the succeeding decades, if at all. Between these two lines of understanding, there was broad agreement and some conflict. This chapter will examine each, but in reverse order, to take account of the chronological sequence in which they developed after 1914.

1. Peace and Vindictiveness

The just war is a war waged with scrupulous respect for its own propriety in terms of both ends and means. The conclusion of such a war requires the rectification of the original injustice, and no more: "The object of war...is...the termination of armed conflict through the restoration of rights."¹ In this case, Britons required the restoration of Belgium's territory and national existence. But the scruples of a just war need not and do not apply in a holy war. As noted above,² the crusader's assurance of the righteousness of his cause implies that final victory is equally assured; this

...radicalizes a conflict by raising the level of violence and ruining chances of a sensible, magnanimous peace. [...] ...he who has wrestled with the enemies of the enemies of the Lord is unlikely to settle for anything less than their unconditional surrender and humiliation.³

As Marrin points out, the peace of a just war seemed to be inadequate on this particular occasion; Britain had been fighting for the eternal verities, and the peace that would end this war would usher in a new world order of, hopefully, righteousness. There was no room for a peace that "...meant merely preserving a society wherein men might sin with impunity and worship Mammon...."⁴ Unless there was a real and

substantial change of direction in the ways of international intercourse, the pre-war situation would remain, and Britain would have fought - and won - a holy war to no purpose; worse, an inconclusive peace which transformed nothing would call into question Britain's whole motivation in waging a holy war.

Of course, the removal of sin from a society could mean much more than merely making German aggression impossible again. Methodists were well aware that both Britain and New Zealand were not free of sin's blight.

...readiness for peace has to do with something more important even than the question of whether or no the main object for which the Allies entered this war lies within reach of accomplishment. Are we morally and religiously ready for peace? Is there any sign yet that the lesson of this terrible war is anywhere being taken with sufficient seriousness? Is there any evidence of repentance for national sins? Is the Church ready for peace? Has it taken sufficiently to heart the weakness of organisation and administration the war has brought to light? Is it prepared to deal in any worthy fashion with the altered conditions which the war is creating? Is not peace being delayed to the extent to which the Church and the Nation remain unheedful of the stroke of moral judgment of which this war is the instrument? Prussian militarism may be crushed, but unless some other things are also crushed, the peace arrived at will rest upon a very insecure foundation. Our wrung and bleeding hearts cry out for peace, but we have need still more earnestly to cry out for the righteousness without which we have no guarantee against a fresh and still more hellish outbreak of the flames of war.

But in this case, 'to cry out for [this] righteousness' did not mean that permanent peace depended only on a regenerated British society; 'Prussian militarism' had to be crushed, and some of the Methodist recommendations concerning what would constitute a righteous and lasting peace showed a spirit of vindictiveness that, from a later vantage point, seems to belie any Christian profession of the necessity of

forgiveness. Two articles appearing just before the end of the war show the kind of spirit that had developed among Methodists by that time. In one of them, a character sketch of General Foch, W.J. Williams commented on Germany's actions in suing for peace.

And the brave little Frenchman has only one answer to Germany's demand for terms of peace; it is a ringing charge to the millions of soldiers under his command to fight on until the savage Hun shall confess defeat by biting the dust. Out of the horrible cruelty of the situation he has created by his own mad ambition there is no way of escape for him but through the humiliation of an unconditional surrender.⁶

The demand for 'unconditional surrender' shows that a peace based on diplomatic compromise and a speedy return to international normality was not part of Methodist thinking. That such militancy was not a necessary consequence of Methodist attitudes to war is shown by the reaction to the consummation of political Union in South Africa in 1910.

That hands that but recently were stretched out against each other in deadly warfare should now be clasped in a cordial political alliance, and the divided races of South Africa should be led to march together under the one flag and onward to the one destiny, is a note of social and moral progress over which the angels of God may well rejoice.⁷

Admittedly, this was retrospective magnanimity, but Methodists had never required a harsh peace to conclude the Anglo-Boer War. But in World War I, much more had been at stake; indeed, in 1918 the Western front itself, briefly, had seemed in danger of collapse. The long and vicious struggle, in which the reality of war had come so much nearer to home, had strained Methodists beyond the breaking point of comprehension of the earthly nature of the war; consequently, charitability regarding the enemy's intentions and magnanimity regarding the terms of peace had been abandoned.

The first part of this thesis showed how such

developments could distort and destroy a realistic Christian view of the war (and it is doubtful that Methodists ever possessed such a view anyway). All the crusading-type arguments analysed previously had their impact on Methodist views of what an effective peace treaty required. Once again, A.T. Guttery captured the militancy, and unconsciously revealed the fantasy, of Methodist claims.

We are all eager for peace; we long to see our sons return and our daughters rejoice. Our homes are desolate and countless millions mourn, but we should be unworthy of our valiant dead and we should earn the anathema of history if we allowed deceit to curse the world our heroes have died to save. We are all ready for negotiations; but they must be open and frank, and they must begin with the confession that crime has no right to conference in the hope of escaping condemnation. We are impassioned in our desire to close this chapter of international hate, but it can only be done when Kaisers abandon their blasphemous sanction of arson, pillage and rape. We long for the day when we can meet the German people in the unity of worship, but that can never be till they cease to clothe the Deity with the pagan attributes of lust and cruelty. There can be no peace, or even truce, till the Germans retire from the lands they have ravaged. There can be no discussion with the thief while he retains his plunder, for that would be to give moral sanction to crime which would be a deeper shame than all the suffering which sacrifice can involve.⁸

Guttery called for a German withdrawal from occupied territory and a prompt cessation of the 'murders' resulting from submarine activity: '...the German must get out of the lands he has ravaged or he shall go under, beneath the weight of the free peoples of the world.'⁹

But ultimately, lasting victory could not be assured until Prussian militarism had been rooted out of Germany and disposed of. The (Presbyterian) New York Outlook said:

Germany will be conquered when Germany is converted. Militarism is a spirit, not merely a form of government, and a spirit can never be changed by conquest, only by conversion; never by force from without, only by a restoration from within.¹⁰

In explanation the same journal affirmed:

The end of this war will come with the end of militarism, not before. And the end of militarism will come when the German people realise the fatal blunder of the war lords, the falsity of their philosophy, and the futile malice of their purpose.¹¹

It is important to note such views, because a section of British Anglican opinion, using the same words, insisted that a harsh treaty would solve nothing.¹² But the fact that Prussian militarism would perish as a philosophy only when the German people repudiated it did not necessarily exclude the possibility that such a repudiation would be aided by emphatically smashing Germany's military might. There seems to be little potential difference between the above statement and Guttery at his most vengeful.

At all costs we must lay low the impiety that has challenged the supremacy of Right. Conscience must be acknowledged in the Chancelleries of the world, and the first step is to smash Teutonic pride. The cruel vanity of war must be exposed, and we dare not allow the New Age to begin with the tame acceptance of the results of violent aggression. It must be made clear to all men that the democracies, which are pacific in their ideals, can, when aroused, smite and strip the military despotisms that dare to break their peace. The war lords ...must be taught that they are fools as well as tyrants. They must learn that the sword breaks in the hands of the aggressor, and that nation is besotted which thinks it profitable to trample its neighbours under foot. Such a lesson will only be learned when Germany¹³ is forced to surrender under the spoil of violence.

An indication of the lengths to which Methodists could go to justify their vindictiveness was given in an article by Dr Walter F. Adeney.¹⁴ Adeney was a leading British Congregationalist Minister, but the reprinting of his article by the Methodist Times provides some justification for taking it as an example of what Methodists would accept. Adeney sought to answer the pacifist charge that Christians were not demonstrating forgiveness in their attitude to Germany.

Forgiveness was 'essentially personal', involving '...a change of relations between the parties, who have been at variance. Strictly speaking, we do not forgive an offence; we forgive the offender.'¹⁵ Unfortunately for this theory, the Bible told of 'the forgiveness of sins'; Adeney explained this by saying that '...the close connection between the offence and the offender is always preserved....'¹⁶ Thus 'the forgiveness of sins' really meant the forgiveness of the sinner; his sin, 'as a deed done, belongs to the irreparable past.' Forgiveness was therefore not to be equated with 'the mere remission of penalties'; indeed, forgiveness could conceivably involve an increased punishment, when necessary, as a 'wholesome corrective'.

Adeney's interpretation of 'the forgiveness of sins' must, at best, remain doubtful; according to a biblical understanding, for God to forgive a repentant sinner of his sins meant that, in restoring that person to his favour, God wiped out all record of the sins committed from his memory, and so the only remaining punishment for sins committed was their evil effects on earth. Adeney continued by saying that the personal nature of forgiveness involved reconciliation; the person wronged had to be reconciled to the offender. (On this argument, God must be reconciled to the sinner! Adeney's expression is a little unfortunate at this point, but his argument is clear enough.) Reconciliation was impossible unless it was mutual. 'If then the offender continues to rage and storm, and show hatred and commit outrages, it is simply possible to forgive him, because he is irreconcilable.'¹⁷

Again, Adeney's interpretation is doubtful; it assumes

an essential righteousness in the wronged party that is hard to square with the recognition that all people are sinners in need of God's grace, from which comes the apostolic injunction to do good to one's enemy, i.e. practise forgiveness towards an unrepentant foe.¹⁸ Adeney attempted to demolish this very point, in countering the argument that Germany might not prove irreconcilable if it were offered generous terms.

...if we talk of reconciliation and at the same time insist on justice to the oppressed and the overthrow of the instruments of aggression, we waste our words on the air. But to talk of reconciliation without this is not only to nullify all the sacrifices that have been made; it is to abandon the cause of the oppressed, the cause of right and liberty. That is to do a tremendous injustice, and the Christian duty of forgiveness cannot require us to outrage the demands of justice.¹⁹

Adeney here proved, perhaps unintentionally, the difficulty of applying essentially personal Christian criteria to international relationships. Even the doctrine of the just war, let alone the theory of the holy war, assigned Christian virtues to nations in a manner that tended not to correspond with the reality of international struggles between earthly kingdoms.

Adeney then contradicted views of Christianity which made God's gift of the Gospel so 'free' that the conditions which made forgiveness possible and right were ignored. He quoted the teaching of Jesus on forgiveness: "Take heed to yourselves; if thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he sin against thee seven times in the day, and seven times turn again to thee, saying I repent, thou shalt forgive him." 'There is to be no end to it - limitless forgiveness,

never wearying generosity when the conditions are fulfilled.²⁰

From the text, it is clear that where repentance has occurred, the Christian is required to forgive; Adeney also posited the reverse, with more doubtful biblical authority, that forgiveness is impossible without repentance. But having posited this, he then quoted John the Baptist's injunction that only worthy fruits proved genuine repentance; more specifically, John told some soldiers: "Do violence to no man, neither exact anything wrongfully."²¹ Clearly referring to Germany, Adeney concluded:

When the aggressors repent and show their penitence by a cessation, and we must add as far as possible a reparation of the huge wrongs they have done, then and only then can they be forgiven.²²

Adeney closed with a warning against the cultivation of a bitter, vengeful spirit towards Germany. This did not mean that a '"fight to the finish"' was not necessary. At that stage of the war, it made no difference for Britons to offer generous peace terms because

It is impossible for anything we say in England to reach the ordinary German citizen, unless this suits the purpose of the Imperial Government, and that purpose just now seems to be to goad on the war by representing it as the only means of saving the Fatherland from ruin.²³

However, a conciliatory spirit emerged in Adeney's final assertion that German cities would not receive commensurate retribution for Prussian militarism's treatment to Louvain and Lille: '...would it not be well for our statesmen's speeches to indicate that the "fight to a finish" does not involve the destruction of the German people, their cities or their homes?'²⁴

This last request suggests that among some Methodists, there remained some vestiges of the just war idea of

balancing means against ends. Further evidence of a remnant of reasonableness may be found in occasional statements made by W.J. Williams. Morrin details the emphatic Anglican rejection of the various peace proposals that were made during the war:

Virtually every one was denounced by the major organs of Anglican opinion as promoting war, and its author subjected to a cacophony of abuse matched only by the worst effusions of the Northcliffe press.²⁵

Williams was not always so rabid. On one occasion, he treated quite mildly, and with an evident touch of sadness at their impracticability in the contemporary situation, two peace proposals which received stinging condemnations in British Anglican circles.²⁶ On a later occasion, in early 1918, Germany preceded an all-out offensive on the Western front with peace proposals. Williams recognised the dangers of accepting a peace proposal at that point.

It almost seems traitorous to suggest that any proposal for peace should be looked at with a Germany that is still unbeaten. That would mean that the war would end leaving Germany unconquered in the field, and victor in the sphere of diplomacy. It would also mean that with an untamed Germany still at large the possibility of war would still cast a dark shadow across the world.²⁷

But Williams desired peace so much that, despite the hatred of Germany which had developed in him by 1918, he was prepared even to go as far as contemplating peace as a remote possibility.

Can Germany offer any terms that the Allies can possibly consider honourable? It is in dealing with such a question that the representatives of the Allies will be confronted with the gravest responsibility and the greatest difficulty that diplomats ever had to face. It certainly goes against the grain to think of leaving Germany unwhipped after such an unparalleled record of crime. But it ought also to go against the grain to think of this horrible war being dragged out, it may be for years, draining the nations of their best blood and costliest treasure. It may cost us much in the way

of sentiment even to consider a peace which compelled us to come to terms with Germany, but the cost of continued war ought also to give us pause. The earth is already sufficiently drunk with the blood of the slain to lead us to cry mightily to God that the horrible holocaust may cease.²⁸

Does this mean that Williams had retained his reasonableness and objectivity to the end of the war, and that he continued to follow a just war explanation of the war rather than adopt a holy war explanation, despite all the pressure placed on him by the shock of World War I's horrors? When his outrage against all things German in 1918 is considered, the answer must be no; but the mistake is to expect that under the pressure of a situation that strained a man's emotions and nerves almost to breaking point, an ideological conversion of any description would have been thought out with rigorous logic. The evidence compels the conclusion that Williams had adopted a holy war viewpoint, but that his desire for peace was such that principles could be sacrificed if necessary. He had not developed the implications of his ideological conversion with implacable logic.

2. A New Hope: Methodism and the League of Nations

It would seem sensible to think that the horrors of World War I finally disposed of the nineteenth century liberal optimism that was so strongly entrenched in pre-war New Zealand Methodism. However, the liberalism proved to be too strongly entrenched among the opinion-creating hierarchy to be destroyed even by such an unprecedentedly and inexplicably horrible experience as the war. Nevertheless, the optimism largely disappeared. World War I was a turning point for a whole civilisation, and New Zealand Methodism

could not avoid this fact. Before the war, a confidence in the coming of a millennial, universal peace existed which had disappeared by the end of the war. By 1919, international peace had become a much more urgent issue, and the fear of an even more cataclysmic war invested the hopes of the Western world, centred on the newly founded League of Nations, with an air of desperation which conflicted somewhat with the pious expressions of confidence in what the new international organisation would achieve. Since absolute pacifism became such a sensitive and decisive issue in New Zealand Methodism twenty years later, the various tensions suggested above must be examined in greater depth in order to understand what made the issue of peace so central in inter-war Methodism.

There is little evidence in official Methodist sources of discussion during the war of how to create and maintain permanent peace after the war was over. It seems likely, however, that such discussion did occur. One substantial article on the issue was printed in the Methodist Times during this period - the outline of a sermon preached by Chaplain H.T. Peat.²⁹ Peat was a young minister, and considering that the formulators of Methodist opinion in this period were older ministers, one is entitled to believe that Peat's views on this issue were not exceptional. There is no evidence to indicate that anything else was the case.

Peat had the task of reconciling his text, Isaiah's great millennial vision, which had been the kind of inspiration that the pre-war liberal optimism had fed on, with the charge that Christianity was for all practical purposes dead, a charge given much greater credibility by the sorry tale of the war itself. Peat's answer was new, still

affirming that man would reach the Golden Age, yet recognising that war had shown that this was a much longer process than people previously believed to be the case:

...humanity has a long way yet to go in the evolution of the Spiritual, before reaching that stage of development when the ape and tiger spirit shall be conquered and men shall learn the art of war no more.³⁰

Peat then stated what seemed to be obvious: at the stage of development which man had then reached, defensive war was justifiable as well as necessary. Britain had been quite right to oppose Germany's militaristic conceit; but at a deeper level,

The present war was inevitable because men's thoughts were of the materialistic order. The worship of material or physical force is anything but an obsolete idolatry [sic]. War at the present time is a regrettable necessity, owing to the survival in man, of the ape and tiger spirit. As we learn more of the spirit of the Most High, the ape and tiger spirit shall be conquered, and the sons of men will more closely resemble their Creator.³¹

Thus Peat could cling to the affirmation that 'The time is coming when war will no longer be necessary.... Then the conditions will be nearer the ideal, and to that state the whole earthly creation is slowly moving.'³²

The war was obviously a crisis; Peat asserted that 'Each crisis marks the beginning of a new stage in human development.'³³ He outlined a theory of the development of human collectivities in human history, from which he could claim that man had advanced far enough from the primitive days to be horrified by war, but not enough to prevent it. Man had begun in a primitive state as a law unto himself: 'Each man determined what was his right; defended that right and avenged the wrong.'³⁴ The first step beyond this stage, 'towards the light', came when men banded together in a tribe for mutual protection; the rights previously belonging to the

individual were handed over to the tribe to be determined and maintained at that level. This pattern continued through all the stages - tribe to State, State to nation, nation to federation of nations. Mankind had reached the point of making the last-named advance.

This war has precipitated another crisis by demonstrating that the national period of development is inadequate. There must be a combination or federation of nations, whose ideals and interests are similar, and that combination of nations must be sufficiently strong to dictate terms to and enforce its will upon any possible combination of other nations.³⁵

The means by which a federation of nations would enforce its will, Peat believed, was the refusal to have dealings with nations not prepared to live by the federations decisions.

This whole process of the 'progressive development of mankind' consisted of 'a transference of armament to a higher authority.' Peat believed that this, rather than disarmament, was the way to peace; in so doing, he expounded a theory of world history which turned the Christian religion into a programme of liberal internationalism, with Jesus as its great exemplar.

Disarmament never has brought peace and never will so long as criminals are permitted to go armed. Peace is not merely the sheathing of the sword, but the triumph of righteousness, and will be assured not by the abandonment of power but by the transference of power to a higher authority.³⁶

On its coercive force, non-intercourse, Peat found justification for his views in the teaching of Jesus.

The greatest Statesman who ever lived recommended this course. That Statesman's name is Jesus Christ. ... "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. (That is diplomacy.) But if he will not hear thee take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of one or two witnesses every word may be established. (That is arbitration.) And if he neglect to hear

them, tell it unto the Church. (That is federation.) But if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." (That is non-intercourse.)³⁷

This was clearly a considerable reinterpretation of the teachings of Jesus, yet it was wholly consistent with the view that the lives of social groupings were as subject to the laws of Christian morality as were the lives of individuals. Such a perception was the major motivation behind something like the prohibition movement.

The motivating force behind Peat's arguments was his recognition of the need of peace, which meant international harmony.

The national viewpoint must give place to the international. The nations must be taught that all nations have a right to live. The nations must not fling away their swords, they must transform them. The weapons that desolated the world and filled it with blood and horror are to be transformed into instruments that will make the land fair and fruitful.³⁸

Christians had a duty to perform in this direction:

... to show mankind that chivalry and valour, and the splendour of courage, can all be retained without the brutality of war. We must show that Christianity introduces mankind to a new kind of courage. The courage that is shown, not in slaying an enemy, but in slaying all spirit of evil in our life. The powers which were dedicated to evil will be touched by the Spirit of Christ and become mighty for good.³⁹

This would help to bring human development to the point where only 'one step towards the Light and final emancipation' was left. This was a 're-recognition of the spiritual': ... the time is coming, though slowly, when men will attack the evil in man's nature, instead of attacking the man....⁴⁰

The development of the proposal to establish a League of Nations after the war caused great excitement, for it seemed to meet hopes in this area that had crystallised during the war.

A stage has been reached in the discussions at Paris in which prominence has been given to the possibility of a moral solvent for the international troubles that hitherto have culminated in costly wars. It becomes permissible to hope that the greatest of all wars will prove the last of all wars, and the beginning of an era of universal peace.⁴¹

This potential was immensely reassuring, since what was true of British Anglican clergy was also true of New Zealand Methodist ministers.

... the League of Nations represented a break in the historical continuum comparable only to the event on Calvary. Alliances, ententes, armaments, and the secret diplomacy had all failed to prevent the near-suicide of Western Civilization. Now, with the old world rapidly going to pieces and the new world still pliable enough to receive lasting impressions, the human race had the opportunity to reshape its destiny.⁴²

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The New President (Rev Harold E. Bellhouse) captured this awareness of grand turning points in world history, and was in no doubt of their significance.

The world's Gethsemane has been endured, Armageddon has run its course, the four and a half years' tale of sacrifice, heroism, tears and blood is now numbered with the past. Again the world breathes freely and sets itself, with new visions and new courage and new outlooks, to fulfil the tasks of peace. And how formidable, how daunting, how stupendous are those tasks! We confront a ravaged world, a world whose foundations have been shaken, whose old values have been revaluated, whose immemorial sanctions have been rudely disturbed. Ancient thrones are toppled over, the conventions of centuries have been destroyed, revolution everywhere is in the air, grim spectres gibber at us here and there. [...]

To bring order out of chaos, stable peace out of welter, to stem the tide of Bolshevism everywhere, moral Bolshevism as well as political and social Bolshevism. These are amongst the tasks which are awaiting us. In the great work of reconstruction what part is the Church going to play? A negative or positive part? If she plays a negative part, then her doom is writ. She consigns herself to the limbo of the effete. And her place will be taken by a worthier and stronger entity.

She is summoned to play a positive part, to take her place in the van. She is summoned to bring to bear

the fulness of her powers, to apply all her energies to this mighty enterprise, and only as she does that will she justify her mission. She must show herself a leader and commander of the people.⁴⁴

It is perhaps of great significance that in this year, when New Zealand Methodism was most aware of the general need for reconstruction following the great war, its President concentrated on four aspects of reform: ecclesiastical (Church Union), moral (prohibition), social (Bolshevism and the labour question), and international (peace and the League of Nations). Comparable pre-war addresses would have included the need for aggressive evangelistic missions largely as a matter of course. Among the Methodist hierarchy, liberalism had emerged from a severe shaking perhaps more firmly entrenched than before the war. Precisely why this happened is not easily discovered, but two things can be recognised. Firstly, in the decade after the war, a clerical generation attained power in New Zealand Methodism which had been brought up and trained in this liberalism; Garland's landmark lecture on the higher criticism was delivered in 1893, and the new ministerial generation had entered the active pastoral work from 1900 onwards. Secondly, as seen above, the evangelicalism that seemed to be confirmed by the experience of the war was actually closer to liberalism than to the old evangelicalism.⁴⁵

This point is enormously important in the development of the Methodist view of the peace that was required to prevent a (potentially worse) repetition of that barbaric war. The remedy was sought not in an assertion of the primacy of evangelical individualism (as would have assuredly happened even forty years earlier), but in an expression of confidence in the possibilities of liberal internationalism, and an

exaltation of liberal Christian ideals as the basis of such possibilities.

Some League of Nations must be established, based upon just and righteous principles. Else shall all this havoc of blood and welter of sacrifice and untellable [sic] misery have been in vain.⁴⁶

It required the shock of such a war to awaken the world to the insanity of all war. But to realise the insanity of war was one thing; it was quite another thing to devise means whereby such insanity should be no longer perpetuated. And the way out of what seemed a horrible impasse has been found in the most elementary principles of Christianity. [...] It is Brotherhood as revealed in the light of the Cross that has at last gained tardy recognition as the law that is to govern the nations of the world in their mutual relationship.⁴⁷

Indeed, in the progress of liberalism, the formation of the League of Nations did seem to be a great triumph; but the threat from many sources of anarchy and revolution would test its practical effectiveness.

What is there in the League of Nations to encourage hope that these other big troubles will be successfully grappled with? Much every way. The moral force that expressed itself in triumph in the League of Nations is not a spent force. It is still available for dealing with the world's needs. At one stage nothing seemed more unlikely, or more impossible even, than an agreement among the nations for the practical elimination of war. That having been accomplished, is any other task now to be written down as impossible? The way out may seem, for the time, to be hidden, and all ordinary attempts at solution may only add to the number of discouraging failures. But let the Christian law of Brotherhood be brought to bear on the discussion of all social, industrial and political problems, let it be recognised as a working factor in the settlement of all questions affecting the rights of nations and individuals that it is the privilege and duty of the strong to help the weak, and of all to work together for the common good, and who will dare to say that any kind of difficulty will be found insuperable?⁴⁸

Thus Methodists were urged to do their part to ensure that the concept of the League of Nations worked effectively. This subject received regular attention from Conference throughout the 1920's and participation in the League of

Nations was urged.

The best way to preserve the peace is a steadfast, honest pursuit of the ideals aimed at in the League of Nations, in which an appeal is made to their best and not to their worst, to their hopes and not to their fears, in which the law of mutual helpfulness is recognised and not a purpose of mutual destruction....⁴⁹

But these were pious hopes and affirmations. What would happen if it became necessary for this League to enforce sanctions against a disobedient nation? Would 'non-intercourse' be enough? As had always been his attitude, W.J. Williams saw war as an occasional necessity.

No one denies that as the world is to-day, behind this Peace Treaty there must be a naval and military force available of sufficient strength to deal with any nation or nations that may persist in being recalcitrant when all pacific methods have been exhausted in the effort to keep them to their pledges.⁵⁰

Such a belief raised two problems. Firstly, as World War I had proved, the logical result of such a view was the loss of a sense of proportion; Methodists were, or became, susceptible to a retributive spirit, masquerading as justice, which led to vindictiveness and fantasy. As Marrin says, "A peace of pure idealism...need not be gentle or generous; if anything, it can actually be so harsh as to work against the cause of peace."⁵¹ It appears that throughout 1919, almost all Methodists were blinded to this possibility. Williams expected good things from the major Allied Powers at the Versailles Peace Conference.

It may be said of France, Britain and America that no lust of territorial or commercial advantage will influence their discussions at the Conference. Their supreme consideration will be what will best tend to link up the nations concerned into a strong, healthy international brotherhood, and what defence can be best adopted against the possibility of another such an infamous assault on the world's peace and prosperity as that which stands for ever branded with

the hall-mark of Germany.⁵²

Strictly speaking, Williams' first contention was proved correct; but the second contention did not necessarily follow from it. These nations might not have desired commercial or territorial gain, but they did desire to gain security; this desire so lacked proportion that a spirit of punishment and vengeance took over, shaping a peace which only sowed the seeds of further international trouble.

The peace concluded, however, tended to follow the lines that Methodists had thought to be acceptable, and so Methodists saw it as quite just. What else could it be when Germany's record was taken into consideration?

A question big with fate to the whole world lay [at Versailles] waiting to be answered. [....] Is it peace? The answer ...was to be given by Germany. Five years ago Germany said, "It is war," and at that word the gates of hell burst open and a destroying host swept across the world, leaving millions slain and a circle of such sorrow and heartbreak as the world never knew before. But the sword that Germany had been so eager to draw had pierced its own bosom with such deadly effect that there was nothing for it but to limp as the arch-criminal among the nations to the judgment bar of history to show cause why there should not be meted out to it such punishment as its colossal crimes had merited. It was not left to it to plead "Guilty" or "Not Guilty." Its monstrous guilt had cried aloud to heaven to the silencing of every other plea.⁵³

An address by Chaplain Arthur Mitchell during the peace celebrations merely reiterated succinctly the holy war explanation of World War I which had been developed during the war.⁵⁴

Never in the history of this Dominion have we met on a more important occasion. Never in the history of our great Empire have we celebrated a more glorious victory. Never in the history of humanity have men rejoiced over a greater emancipation from tyranny and oppression than we do to-day. We may recall great days of jubilation and triumph, days fraught with tremendous possibilities, problems and perils, but none of them can match this glorious event.... It is one of the noblest and most hopeful moments in all

history, for humanity looks for the realisation of its cherished ideal of Justice, Freedom, Righteousness. Democracy has triumphed, Autocracy [is] dethroned. It was a great day when Britain declared that she would not allow little Belgium to be done to death and sacrificed to German lust.⁵⁵

Mitchell believed, in retrospect, that a 'supreme moment in history' had been reached in 1914.

Was the world to be governed by brute force, or by the enlightened will of free peoples? Long ago the prophet of God had voiced the eternal principle upon which true progress could be assured..., "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord."

What is the Spirit of God? The Spirit of Justice, Truth, Freedom, Righteousness. The nations that stood for these principles were helping forward the true progress of humanity and were building on a secure foundation.⁵⁶

The identification of God with the liberal internationalist vision was complete.

Mitchell continued by asserting that Europe had become aware of Germany's crimes, and now understood the meaning of Prussianism.

This war was the result of illegal ambition, lust of power, and impossible philosophy.[...] The deification of force, and the rejection of noble idealism by Germany, these things were the real cause of the war.⁵⁷

The result had been the planning of war by the 'fire-eating Kaiser' in order to 'vindicate the gospel of the super-man' - at horrendous cost to Europe. Finally, it was decided that the time was ripe for a war of conquest, whereupon '...followed a series of crimes which have laid a great nation low, and besmirched her honour for many centuries.'⁵⁸ Germany had arrogantly attacked Belgium, but Britain and the Empire, including New Zealand, had fought for liberty; and Mitchell, happily, was thus able to address his audience on the reasons for Germany's failure:

Because she had no moral or spiritual ideal. When

these are absent in a movement, sooner or later that movement is bound to collapse. Germany's policy shocked the moral sense of the world.... Her outrages and atrocities have placed her outside the pale of nations, and until she shows some sign of regeneration she must dwell in the house of correction until she proves that "the way of the transgressor is hard." History tells of nations that have risen to great power, but have abused that power, and have repudiated trust and responsibility. In the interests of the race and the progress of humanity they had to pass through the fires of discipline, or be swept aside altogether. That is happening once again. Germany and her fellow-conspirators have worshipped the God of Force. But the moral and spiritual forces of humanity have won, and we are here to-day to thank God for the victory He has given us.⁵⁹

It is quite clear from these sentiments that in the conditions that lay behind the foundation of the League of Nations, fantastic views of the war and unrealistic expectations of the ensuing peace dominated, thus bedevilling the League's chance of evolving to represent a practical force in international relationships. This leads to the second problem involved in Williams' belief in the occasional necessity of war. Modern warfare had developed to the point where some preparation for war was seen as a necessity for ensuring national survival. In such a position, it was impossible to draw the line between legitimate defence and militarism. This problem was not new. It had always been the rock on which the doctrine of the just war would stand or founder; but the colossal horror of World War I had given the whole question a new urgency. Not even the League of Nations, as Peat had recognised, was the final solution. Rev Moses Ayrton agreed:

My plea, ...while we are at the cross-roads in international matters is, that our Churches will rally to the support, not of party politics, but to a great moral idea contained in the League of Nations, which may be used as a stepping-stone to the more ultimate and distant goal [a world enduring peace].⁶⁰

However, the title of Ayrton's plea, 'by a Pacifist', was highly significant for the future. In the 1930's, a generation of Methodists rose to young manhood which repudiated the whole idea that the use of force could ever be just. Curiously, it was the very concern expressed by the Methodist Conference of the immediate post-war years that attention should be given to the whole question of peace which led to the emergence of a generation whose views were too radical for the Conference as a whole. An important step in this process was the succession to the Connexional Editorship in 1924 of Rev Percy R. Paris. Paris was virtually an absolute pacifist, and there was evidently some anxiety over his assumption of the editorial office. A year later, the first of the pacifist controversies which were thereafter to rack the Methodist Church arose in the correspondence columns of the Methodist Times. The new age had well and truly arrived.

New Zealand Methodism's development and wide acceptance of a holy war explanation of World War I prevented them from seeing the peace to end that war as an exercise in diplomatic readjustment and compromise. It was felt that Germany should be punished for her crimes, so that the world would indeed be made safe for democracy, as the American President, Woodrow Wilson, had declared to be that country's purpose in joining the war in 1917. This led to a vindictive spirit that virtually condemned the newly founded League of Nations to ineffectiveness from the start; into that body went all the hopes and hatreds which had been pushed beyond the point of realism during the war years. Peace had become a very urgent issue in the Methodist Church, and the seeds of the later

pacifist movement were being sown.

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER 10

- 1 Marrin, p.218.
- 2 See above, Ch.4, pp.111-12
- 3 Marrin, p.125.
- 4 Ibid., p.218.
- 5 'Are We Ready for Peace?' (editorial note), NZMT, 6/1/1917, p.1.
- 6 'General Foch: Pacemaker and Peacemaker' (editorial note), NZMT, 26/10/1918, p.1.
- 7 "W.J.W.", 'Annus Mirabilis 1910' (leader), NZMT, 31/12/1910, p.1.
- 8 'Get Out or Get Under", NZMT, 26/10/1918, p.7.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 'When Peace will Come', NZMT, 4/8/1917, p.11.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Marrin, p.232.
- 13 'Get Out or Get Under', p.7.
- 14 For the following argument, see 'The Ethics of Forgiveness', NZMT, 1/9/1917, p.9. Reprinted from the London Christian World.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 See Romans 12:14, 17-21.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid.; emphasis added. Text quoted: Luke 17:3-4; emphasis added to show the conditions of forgiveness which Adeney stressed.
- 21 Luke 3:7, 14.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Marrin, pp.222-3.
- 26 See 'Are We Ready for Peace?' p.1.; also Marrin, pp.227-30.
- 27 'Is it Peace?' (editorial note), NZMT, 30/3/1918, p.1.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 For the following argument, see 'How to End War', NZMT, 2/2/1918, p.9. Text: Isaiah 2:4.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Ibid. Text quoted: Matthew 18:15-17.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 'The Birth of a Great Hope' (editorial note), NZMT, 1/3/1919, p.1.
- 42 Marrin, pp.240-1
- 43 Entered the ministry in 1894; President in 1919; Editor, NZMT, August 1936-March 1947; Chairman of the District thirteen times;

- became a Supernumerary in 1936.
- 44 Presidential Address, NZMT, 1/3/1919, p.5.
- 45 See above, Ch.5, pp.140-1
- 46 Ibid., p.6.
- 47 'A Great Christian Triumph' (editorial),
NZMT, 1/3/1919, p.5.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 'Is it Peace?' (editorial), NZMT, 5/7/1919,
p.8.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 Marrin, p.218.
- 52 'The Peace Conference' (editorial note),
NZMT, 1/2/1919, p.1.
- 53 'Is it Peace?' 5/7/1919, p.8.
- 54 Entered the Bible Christian ministry in 1890;
Chairman of the District once; became a
Supernumerary in 1930.
- 55 'Peace Celebrations', NZMT, 16/8/1919, p.7.
- 56 Ibid. Text quoted: Zechariah 4:6.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 'A Plea to the Churches by a Pacifist', NZMT,
21/12/1918, p.4.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored the view that New Zealand Methodism entered a crisis during World War I, and that this crisis represented a fundamental turning point in the Methodist Church's relation to New Zealand society. Statistically, Methodism advanced in the nineteenth century and declined in the twentieth century; the first two decades of the twentieth century were the turning point in this pattern. Behind all the new approaches to the surrounding society which emerged after World War I (and continue to emerge) lay the root fact that the old ways no longer appealed to the community which Methodists were trying to influence and convert.

A number of concurrent developments, some of which were interrelated, came together during World War I to mould this fundamental numerical problem into the shape which it finally assumed. By splitting this thesis into two parts, a reasonably useful distinction has been made between problems which were caused by the war and problems which emerged during the war. Both strands can ultimately be brought together within the overall consideration that late nineteenth century Methodism was becoming irrelevant in a world which was changing in significant and disturbing ways.

The first source of crisis consisted of the problems which were caused by the war. Before the war, the question of the Christian attitude to war had been peripheral in Methodism. The doctrine of the just war was not an indispensable part of the way of salvation, and so it was not deemed worthy of great attention. Moreover, in an

imperialistic age, Methodist loyalty to King and Country was pronounced, and Methodism possessed virtually nothing in the way of a pacifist tradition.

World War I changed the position entirely, bringing the subject of the Christian attitude to war from the periphery to the centre of Methodist doctrine and ethics. The rational, measured tones of the just war doctrine seemed to be outrageous in the light of the ruthless, brutal, heartless campaign of horror which New Zealand Methodists believed Germany to be waging. Under the stress of the so-called "facts", as presented by the secular press and accepted by them, Methodists stretched the just war doctrine to the point where they had effectively adopted a holy war explanation. Germany incarnated Evil, and Britain was contending for the forces of Light. The soldiers who willingly sacrificed their lives in this deeply holy cause had made the 'supreme sacrifice' in the cause of righteousness, and thus received special honour in the pages of history.

This absolutism simply did not fit the reality of the war. The war was simply a dynastic power struggle which got out of hand because it was waged with modern technological and organisational efficiency. What such efficiency could create was entirely unknown before World War I, and so as the horror of the war became clear, the tendency was to twist facts to fit the old views rather than develop entirely new views. For New Zealand Methodists, the result was farcically, tragically unsuccessful; they believed a lie, and in the post-war disillusionment had to face up to their terrible gullibility. What such views could do was demonstrated in the type of peace settlement which they

advocated; they sought justice, consciously meaning proper retribution, and unconsciously upholding a worthlessly vindictive treaty which backfired horribly in the post-war world.

The gradual development of a strong absolute pacifist minority in inter-war New Zealand Methodism cannot be explained without stressing the impact of World War I. The war moved the question of the Christian attitude to war to the centre of Methodist awareness, but instead of providing a satisfactory answer, the holy war explanation was so embarrassingly absurd that the question remained unanswered for post-war Methodism. The need of an answer was made more acute by the realisation that the largely unquestioning loyalty to one's country and the indifference to collective problems could involve Methodists in collective wickedness before they understood the issues which were at stake. The result of these problems was the attempt to find ways to assert the spiritual independence of the Church in response to collective questions. Out of these attempts the pacifist movement emerged; but it must be remembered that the considerable majority who did not adopt absolute pacifist views sought non-pacifist solutions to the same problem.

The second source of crisis consisted of the problems which emerged during the war and were influenced by the war, but which would have emerged even without the war. These essentially related to the difficulty of communicating the Methodist gospel effectively to the people of New Zealand. As far back as the 1880's, Methodists had been concerned at their apparent isolation from the working classes, and this soon became a more general concern that their influence on

society was waning. The remedy, of course, consisted of shaping the kind of Church that New Zealanders wanted and needed (or so Methodists believed).

The first step in this process was the reformulation of Methodist doctrine. The old evangelicalism of Wesley's day no longer appealed to late nineteenth century Methodists who were being decisively influenced by the contemporary liberal optimism. Hell was largely discarded, and individualistically introspective methods of attaining holiness became unpopular. Methodists instead thought of the Kingdom of God as a perfect earthly state to be reached by human endeavour rather than by the instantaneous intervention of God. Such views had a dissipating impact on Methodist doctrine; Methodists called for credal reformulation, but generally tended to be clearer on what they wanted to discard than on what they wanted to introduce.

If doctrinal reconstruction was wanted, but in a rather indeterminate way, Methodists were much clearer concerning social issues. A millennium to be reached by human endeavour necessitated claiming all aspects of life for Christ, and late nineteenth century Methodists had a vision of what a sanctified society would include. Social reforms would wipe out poverty and the degrading living conditions which accompanied it; moral reforms would wipe out the attraction of and addiction to vice which degraded human lives and wasted people's opportunities. Late nineteenth century Methodists tended to concentrate more on the latter, and most of their reforming energy was channelled into the prohibition movement.

World War I broke out at a time when this vision was

already beginning to show signs of breaking up before the realities of rapid social change. Added to numerical stagnation was the failure to secure prohibition; the prohibition movement had actually retreated after a near-victory in 1911. Even had the war not intervened, a re-examination and reformulation of the vision would have eventually become necessary as the fact of Methodism's declining influence in New Zealand society exercised its full weight of influence. But the war did intervene, giving Methodism what it thought to be a golden opportunity to win New Zealand society over to its vision. The Church's enthusiastic support for and participation in the war would bring its own reward, as the soldiers (who very visibly represented the masses) would flock to the churches in gratitude for the service given to them in the hellish conditions of the war. This attitude effectively meant that the war delayed the process of reformulating the vision, despite Methodist rhetoric warning of the need to be ready for the new conditions of the "new age" which was to follow the war.

To Methodism's searing disappointment, the soldiers rejected the late nineteenth century Methodist vision of a righteous society. There was never really any possibility that any other result would occur. Methodism's support for Britain's participation in a holy war seemed horrifically nonsensical to the soldiers, who realised that war was the enemy and German soldiers its victims as much as British soldiers. Before this awful truth, Methodist attempts to instil personal religion and moral probity in the soldiers while supporting the war were rejected as being hypocritical,

or at least blind. Needless to say, on their return nothing could induce them to overcome their bitterness and attend Methodist churches. Nor could they be induced to give their backing to coercive societal moral righteousness; they voted out prohibition in April 1919.

The soldier's rejection, however, merely demonstrated with a clarity which perhaps would not have emerged had there been no war that the Methodist vision needed reformulation. Numerical stagnation and the rejection of societal moral change were realities by 1914; the only element added to the situation by the war was the unprecedented horror of technologically sophisticated modern warfare. But the interruption of the war, by providing an apparent alternative to the need for reformulation, simply made that need much more glaringly obvious by the end of the war. Some Methodists could see the need for reconstruction before the end of 1917. New Zealand Methodism became conscious of being in a crisis before the war ended. All alternatives to reformulation fell apart. The Church failed to secure the soldiers, prohibition, or Evangelical Church union. It therefore had to face the new age alone.

It faced the post-war age none too well. Moral campaigns slowly began to recede into the background, but the Church failed to handle two particularly pressing issues well. Firstly, the liberalising element in Methodist theology had always been opposed by a section of the Methodist laity; the war crystallised this opposition, which eventually flowed into the fundamentalist movement. The Methodist hierarchy, whose theological position was a rather vague evangelical liberalism, rejected this fundamentalism

but was unable to provide a clearly-expressed theological alternative, thus condemning itself to facing the problems of unresolved dispute. Secondly, the newly created League of Nations was hailed as the victory of the pre-war liberalism, and was expected to be instrumental in eventually ending all war. This unrealism, exacerbated by approval of the vindictive absolutism of the Treaty of Versailles, doomed the League from the start by piling impossible hopes onto it. Yet Methodists who did not adopt fundamentalism, with its unearthly millennial vision, tended to place their hopes in the League, with its earthly millennial vision.

But one must be fair to the Methodists of the immediate post-war period. The war had such a shattering impact on their world-view that it was a time when millennial hopes of various kinds abounded. People today have become a little more used to the threat of an infernal conflict burning up the earth (literally as well as metaphorically). To Methodists of the early twentieth century, however, this was a new and virtually inexplicable experience. How to control and, if possible, prevent catastrophic international war became (and has since remained) a very urgent question during World War I. If the solutions of that period can be dismissed as unrealistic, then much the same must be said for similar efforts of sixty years later; the problem proves to be as intractable as ever. As for Methodism, it experienced half a century of relative stagnation followed by a sudden collapse which is still continuing; its problems of credal reformulation have not disappeared, nor has its difficulty in communicating its (changing) social message to New Zealand society. World War I was a crucial turning point in New

Zealand Methodist history; problems were made glaringly visible that still await effective and permanent solution.

APPENDIX I

General Returns of the Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Church in New Zealand 1855-1873.

Year	All Preaching Places	Ministers	Home Missionaries	Local Preachers	Class Leaders
1855	40	19	2	44	36
1856	13	10	1	16	19
1857	36	18	0	34	25
1858	43	20	0	35	33
1859	45	17	0	38	33
1860	55	20	0	50	44
1861	63	19	0	54	41
1862	60	20	0	50	58
1863	65	22	1	62	47
1864	86	21	2	89	58
1865	95	20	10	90	58
1866	150	29	4	108	84
1867	164	31	4	128	102
1868	168	33	4	122	102
1869	207	38	4	158	137
1870	289	45	5	181	172
1871	294	45	8	191	182
1872	271	46	4	187	181
1873	245	49	5	186	183

Year	Members	Sunday School Teachers	Sunday Scholars	Worshippers including Scholars
1855	508	76	732	2514
1856	282	30	198	820
1857	596	90	812	3156
1858	633	105	914	3470
1859	632	118	922	3650
1860	694	157	1194	4031
1861	737	190	1475	4790
1862	836	207	1639	5086
1863	1027	215	1823	6238
1864	1225	229	1630	9317
1865	1262	236	2177	9752
1866	1623	368	3294	11671
1867	1782	477	4074	13232
1868	1826	461	4041	13111
1869	2192	499	3750	14293
1870	2658	746	5618	16962
1871	2785	800	6119	17738
1872	2944	800	7221	21061
1873	3014	734	7627	22081

Source: MACA, 1855-1873. New Zealand was divided into two

(later three) Mission Districts within the Australasian Annual Conference.

1. Returns only for Auckland Mission District
2. No distinction of European and Native returns 1870-3.

APPENDIX II

General Returns of the New Zealand Annual Conference of the Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Church 1874-1913.

Year	All Preaching Places	Ministers	Home Missionaries	Local Preachers	Class Leaders
1874	203	49	4	165	150
1875	228	49	4	168	158
1876	244	51	4	181	170
1877	242	53	2	200	148
1878	265	54	7	191	160
1879	267	58	8	203	149
1880	290	65	13	213	156
1881	314	70	8	255	191
1882	355	75	9	254	191
1883	347	76	11	275	188
1884	364	72	11	272	213
1885	390	74	11	300	224
1886	410	77	13	314	230
1887	413	78	15	340	235
1888	455	77	14	341	239
1889	466	78	17	343	236
1890	462	78	16	361	228
1891	476	77	16	353	226
1892	487	77	14	345	218
1893	498	82	17	360	217
1894	517	85	18	375	212
1895	519	89	20	373	196
1896	544	92	22	402	214
1897	638	111	28	485	210
1898	633	117	27	506	186
1899	648	113	20	507	188
1900	675	115	21	525	178
1901	658	116	25	530	157
1902	653	118	25	546	145
1903	642	122	28	506	142
1904	644	124	30	534	133
1905	656	131	32	569	132
1906	680	133	37	560	127
1907	719	134	38	572	129
1908	717	134	42	603	107
1909	729	138	51	614	91
1910	749	136	53	632	89
1911	803	137	53	665	120
1912	807	143	56	673	124
1913	789	146	54	665	107

APPENDIX II (continued)

Year	Members	Sunday School Teachers	Sunday Scholars	Bible Class Members	Worshippers including Scholars
1874	2594	866	7600		20087
1875	2726	933	8487		22406
1876	2880	1014	9169		23392
1877	3001	1142	10470		24564
1878	3189	1246	10751		27512
1879	3192	1269	11237		29054
1880	3276	1307	11660		30611
1881	3542	1520	13365		35389
1882	3880	1574	13892		37734
1883	4453	1586	15289		39698
1884	5145	1656	15176		42049
1885	5925	1735	15799		43386
1886	6497	1815	16386		45175
1887	6851	1875	16870		46646
1888	7062	1866	17844		46513
1889	7121	2003	18250		47999
1890	7405	2006	19829		49231
1891	7746	2013	19403		51266
1892	7910	2062	19429		52094
1893	8209	2078	20561		53576
1894	8524	2050	19790		55319
1895	8907	1993	19756		57499
1896	9622	2083	20283		59850
1897	11236	2375	22364		67211
1898	11568	2336	22404		67686
1899	11899	2278	22013		68524
1900	12185	2275	21808		67058
1901	12013	2247	21206		66382
1902	12494	2169	20188		67781
1903	12778	2163	19923		68556
1904	13430	2211	20411		70208
1905	13924	2174	20629		72062
1906	14409	2206	21174		72627
1907	14763	2272	21716		73560
1908	15056	2163	21231		71738
1909	15472	2203	22159		72600
1910	15988	2264	22609		71695
1911	16567	2309	23058		73076
1912	17173	2330	23015	2843	71307
1913	17701	2352	22971	3228	67699

Source: MCNZ, 1874-1913.

1. Union of the Wesleyan Methodist, Free Methodist, and Bible Christian Connexions in New Zealand April 1896.
2. Includes Deaconesses 1906-1913.
3. Also recorded under Sunday Scholars.

APPENDIX III

General Returns of the New Zealand District of the Primitive Methodist Church 1873-1913.

Year	All Preaching Places	Ministers	Circuit and Home Missionaries	Local Preachers	Class Leaders
1873	33	7	0	49	24
1874	47	7	0	65	28
1875	37	9	0	74	31
1876	46	12	0	91	38
1877	46	12	0	101	43
1878	47	14	2	101	44
1879	46	16	0	92	48
1880	53	19	0	118	52
1881	61	18	0	131	52
1882	60	18	0	130	45
1883	65	16	0	131	45
1884	61	18	0	133	54
1885	69	17	0	125	52
1886	66	16	3	136	41
1887	76	16	2	132	33
1888	82	19	2	122	--
1889	--	19	2	109	32
1890	98	19	2	115	31
1891	--	--	--	--	--
1892	86	--	--	--	--
1893	112	27	2	118	42
1894	119	27	2	128	44
1895	126	28	1	128	45
1896	122	27	3	133	45
1897	127	27	3	134	44
1898	128	28	4	136	48
1899	132	29	4	144	50
1900	136	29	4	145	47
1901	135	30	2	--	--
1902	--	31	3	--	--
1903	139	34	5	151	42
1904	144	35	6	159	42
1905	143	39	3	161	40
1906	168	41	4	169	48
1907	163	40	5	173	53
1908	164	39	5	173	58
1909	168	39	5	186	53
1910	--	46	4	191	--
1911	151	44	6	208	63
1912	164	46	5	203	55
1913	172	43	5	208	49

APPENDIX III (continued)

Year	Members	Sunday School Teachers	Sunday Scholars	Hearers
1873	440	116	848	1693
1874	531	137	983	2180
1875	642	166	1278	-----
1876	819	233	1674	-----
1877	899	248	1877	-----
1878	1020	296	2125	-----
1879	1063	305	2441	-----
1880	1067	321	2804	-----
1881	1111	352	3043	-----
1882	1206	364	3094	-----
1883	1191	366	3225	-----
1884	1281	382	3453	-----
1885	1282	381	3435	-----
1886	1276	368	3162	3322
1887	1217	387	3358	3792
1888	1284	392	3671	-----
1889	1270	431	3609	3740
1890	1222	425	3463	3210
1891	1298	436	3554	5013
1892	1339	457	3883	5220
1893	1411	511	4401	6410
1894	1443	509	4600	6534
1895	1466	508	4221	6750
1896	1495	498	4591	7503
1897	1493	515	4687	7824
1898	1678	519	4728	8407
1899	1830	554	4770	8729
1900	1990	551	4826	8683
1901	2082	546	4890	8793
1902	2144	525	4717	-----
1903	2270	540	4825	8853
1904	2449	548	5000	9804
1905	2536	568	5101	9683
1906	2648	599	5353	9636
1907	2822	603	5431	9976
1908	2882	613	5442	9972
1909	2969	643	5904	10298
1910	3146	649	6214	10355
1911	3264	661	6275	10485
1912	3362	670	6340	10282
1913	3291	668	6170	16217

Sources: Minutes, New Zealand Primitive Methodist District Meeting, 1873-1892; Minutes, New Zealand Primitive Methodist District Conference, 1893-1912; Minutes, British Primitive Methodist Conference, 1892-1912; NZPM, 1889-1913; New Zealand Primitive Methodist Station Sheets, 1902-1904; W.T. Blight, "A History of Primitive Methodism in New Zealand 1893-1913", unpublished MS; MCNZ, 1913. The New Zealand Primitive returns are scattered throughout these sources, and there are

many errors and omissions in the sources themselves.

1. Equivalent to the Wesleyan column of "Worshippers" minus Sunday Scholars.
2. Includes Sunday Scholars.

APPENDIX IV

General Returns of the New Zealand Methodist Church 1913-1930.

Year	All Preaching Places	Ministers	Missionaries	Deacon- esses	Preachers
1913	961	189	59		873
1914	928	188	48	11	855
1915	929	188	53	10	853
1916	936	184	54	9	863
1917	922	176	59	10	843
1918	890	170	54	11	840
1919	883	162	51	15	841
1920	870	176	45	13	800
1921	828	181	44	15	773
1922	825	181	46	14	724
1923	867	181	50	10	773
1924	872	179	55	11	757
1925	880	185	57	10	776
1926	915	184	65	11	766
1927	908	181	61	7	752
1928	910	181	64	8	749
1929	900	184	65	8	751
1930	910	187	59	9	745

Year	Members	Sunday School Teachers	Sunday Scholars	Bible Class Members	Worshippers including Scholars
1913	20992	3023	29141	3228	83916
1914	21751	3103	29917	3897	80247
1915	22226	3196	30191	4014	81713
1916	22503	3276	29448	3493	81002
1917	22663	3128	28783	3255	79082
1918	22953	3162	29035	3341	78772
1919	23288	3140	29771	3145	77156
1920	23046	3045	29582	3520	76601
1921	22612	2851	27346	4919	72394
1922	22819	2996	29154	5545	73692
1923	23451	2999	30463	5489	73205
1924	23491	3100	29248	5946	73239
1925	24034	3129	31008	6377	73514
1926	24017	3125	30343	6412	73613
1927	24241	3121	30298	6362	72609
1928	24395	3184	30570	6597	72565
1929	24543	3313	30695	7352	70958
1930	24429	3168	29419	6937	71056

Source: MCNZ, 1913-1930.

1. Includes Deaconesses.

2. Also recorded under Sunday Scholars.

APPENDIX V

New Zealand Census Statistics of Religious Denominations in New Zealand 1874-1926.

a = adherents as a percentage of the population
 b = average attendance in the census month as a percentage of the population.
 c = average attendance as a percentage of the census adherence
 d = estimated total local attendance as a percentage of the population.

		1874	1878	1881	1886	1891	1896
Total Attendance		23.50	24.30	24.00	28.40	28.30	29.80
Anglican	a	43.15	41.92	41.50	39.72	40.51	40.27
	b	6.76	6.98	6.60	6.98	5.94	6.84
	c	15.67	16.65	15.90	17.57	14.66	16.99
Roman Catholic	a	13.70	14.09	14.08	13.94	13.96	14.07
	b	3.72	3.26	3.96	4.49	4.87	5.13
	c	27.15	23.14	28.13	32.21	34.89	36.46
Presbyterian	a	24.60	22.90	23.09	22.56	22.62	22.78
	b	6.29	6.18	5.97	6.87	6.51	6.93
	c	25.57	26.99	25.86	30.45	28.78	30.42
Total Methodist	a	8.53	9.04	9.53	9.53	10.10	10.42
	b	5.10	5.50	4.90	5.11	5.69	5.84
	c	59.79	60.84	51.42	53.62	56.34	56.05
Wesleyan Methodist	a	7.71	7.77	8.07	7.81	8.80	9.00
	b	4.32	4.33	3.86	3.97	4.33	5.04
	c	56.03	55.73	47.83	50.83	49.20	56.00
Primitive Methodist	a	0.59	0.89	0.95	0.90	0.83	1.00
	b	0.29	0.74	0.51	0.75	0.84	0.77
	c	49.15	83.15	53.68	83.33	101.20	77.00
Other Methodist	a	0.23	0.38	0.51	0.82	0.47	0.42
	b	0.49	0.43	0.53	0.39	0.52	0.03
	c	213.04	113.16	103.92	47.56	110.64	7.14
Baptist	a	2.16	2.21	2.34	2.48	2.37	2.28
	b	0.55	0.56	0.52	0.88	0.80	0.80
	c	25.46	25.34	22.22	35.48	33.76	35.09
Congregational	a	1.85	1.34	1.37	1.35	1.07	0.96
	b	0.39	0.71	0.69	0.82	0.59	0.49
	c	21.08	52.99	50.36	60.74	55.14	51.04

APPENDIX V (continued)

		1901	1906	1911	1916	1921	1926
Total Attendance		-----	24.80	23.30	22.10	20.10	18.91
	d	-----	-----	-----	-----	33.96	34.40
Anglican	a	40.84	41.51	41.14	42.90	42.22	41.21
	b	-----	5.62	5.28	5.00	4.54	4.37
	c	-----	13.54	12.76	11.66	10.75	10.60
	d	-----	-----	-----	-----	9.44	10.42
Roman Catholic	a	14.12	14.22	13.97	14.17	13.47	12.89
	b	-----	4.67	4.77	4.90	4.63	4.11
	c	-----	32.84	34.14	34.58	34.37	31.89
	d	-----	-----	-----	-----	7.28	6.81
Presbyterian	a	22.87	22.96	23.33	24.36	24.57	24.60
	b	-----	5.86	5.48	5.53	4.74	4.80
	c	-----	25.52	23.49	22.70	19.29	19.51
	d	-----	-----	-----	-----	8.40	8.54
Total Methodist	a	10.86	10.06	9.43	9.91	9.22	9.02
	b	-----	4.62	4.57	3.82	3.17	2.55
	c	-----	45.92	48.46	38.55	34.38	28.27
	d	-----	-----	-----	-----	5.23	4.58
Wesleyan Methodist	a	9.20	7.18	6.34	-----	-----	-----
	b	-----	3.90	3.74	-----	-----	-----
	c	-----	54.32	58.99	-----	-----	-----
Primitive	a	1.32	2.46	2.72	-----	-----	-----
	b	-----	0.73	0.82	-----	-----	-----
	c	-----	29.67	30.15	-----	-----	-----
Other Methodist	a	0.34	0.42	0.34	-----	-----	-----
Baptist	a	2.08	2.00	1.99	1.95	1.63	1.63
	b	-----	0.79	0.60	0.55	0.55	0.55
	c	-----	39.50	30.15	28.21	33.74	33.74
	d	-----	-----	-----	-----	0.61	0.91
Congregational	a	0.87	0.83	0.87	0.77	0.65	0.54
	b	-----	0.46	0.42	0.30	0.24	0.27
	c	-----	55.42	48.28	38.96	36.92	50.00
	d	-----	-----	-----	-----	0.30	0.23

Source: New Zealand Censuses 1874-1926. I am indebted to Dr Peter Lineham of Massey University for providing me with these statistics.

1. Union of the Wesleyan Methodist, Free Methodist, and Bible Christian Connexions in New Zealand April 1896.
2. No attendance figures given.
3. Renamed the Methodist Church of Australasia in New Zealand in 1902.
4. Union of the Methodist and Primitive Methodist Connexions in New Zealand in 1913.

APPENDIX VI

Ministerial Standing of Active Ministers in Connexion with the Wesleyan Methodist and Methodist Churches in New Zealand 1874-1953 (selected).

	1874	1879	1884	1889	1894	1899	1904	1909
0-14	14	20	16	11	13	13	25	23
5-19	9	11	20	12	10	15	11	22
10-14	10	11	8	18	12	18	13	11
15-19	4	8	11	9	8	12	17	12
20-24	2	4	7	9	11	17	12	15
25-29	2	1	4	7	9	13	18	12
30-34	0	2	0	4	4	8	13	14
35-39	2	0	2	0	1	4	6	10
40+	0	1	0	1	0	1	2	4
Total	43	58	68	71	78	101	117	123

	1914	1919	1924	1929	1934	1939	1944	1949
0-4	25	27	24	25	31	32	30	37
5-9	26	28	24	14	21	31	28	32
10-14	25	22	27	25	19	21	29	25
15-19	15	25	20	24	24	18	20	26
20-24	16	16	23	19	22	21	16	17
25-29	15	14	14	22	19	20	22	11
30-34	12	14	13	14	20	14	18	18
35-39	11	6	9	11	8	18	10	11
40+	9	7	2	5	3	4	6	0
Total	154	159	156	159	167	179	179	177

Source: MCNZ, 1874-1952

1. Union of the Wesleyan Methodist, Free Methodist, and Bible Christian Connexions in New Zealand April 1896.
2. Union of the Methodist and Primitive Methodist Connexions in New Zealand February 1913.

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